

UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE
INSTITUT UNIVERSITAIRE DE HAUTES ÉTUDES INTERNATIONALES

**THE BOLSHEVIKS
AND THE
NATIONAL AND COLONIAL
QUESTION
(1917-1928)**

THÈSE

PRÉSENTÉE A L'UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE
POUR L'OBTENTION DU GRADE DE DOCTEUR ÈS SCIENCES POLITIQUES

PAR

DEMETRIO BOERSNER

DU

VÉNÉZUÉLA

THÈSE N° 106

LIBRAIRIE E. DROZ

8, RUE VERDAINE
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La Commission Mixte, composée des Doyens des Facultés de Droit, des Lettres, et des Sciences économiques et sociales, et du Directeur de l'Institut Universitaire de Hautes Etudes Internationales, sur le préavis de MM. Maurice BAUMONT, Maurice BOURQUIN, Jacques FREYMOND et Wilhelm RÖPKE, professeurs à l'Institut Universitaire, autorise l'impression de la présente thèse, sans entendre par là exprimer d'opinion sur les propositions qui y sont énoncées.

Genève, le 28 janvier 1957.

Pour la Commission Mixte :

Jacques FREYMOND,

Directeur de l'Institut Universitaire.

Thèse N° 106.

To my Parents

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since 1914, the edifice of the liberal world economy, based on Western European rule, has begun to shake. The economic, social and political forms, as well as the spiritual values, which characterized the nineteenth century, are being challenged throughout the world. The expansion of Europe to the remotest regions of the earth has awakened immense new social and political forces, which are now arising against the domination of those who shook them out of their slumber.

The twentieth-century revolution is two-fold. The European ruling groups produced, through the very essence of their economic and social system, two groups of have-nots — the colonial peoples, and the industrial workers. The English or German weavers of the nineteenth century, who worked sixteen hours a day, lived in infamous slums, and had an average life expectancy of *five years* (because of the high infant mortality rate), through their very existence and through their hatred against their exploiters gave rise to doctrines of social revolution. These doctrines were produced by sons of the bourgeoisie, but the proletarians adopted them and put them into practice. And in the same manner, the colonial peoples, who saw their native cultures trampled into the ground by the boots of colonists who were seldom paragons of tact and humanity, searched for new doctrines which could serve them in their struggle for liberation and for dignity. They, too, found these doctrines in the very teachings of the Westerners who colonized them. The system of liberal capitalism, which produced the exploitation of the nineteenth-century workers, laid the basis for the economic and social doctrine of St. Simon, of Proudhon, of Karl Marx. And in the same way the system of the modern nation-state, on the strength of which the West conquered the world, showed the colonial peoples the road along which their own independence and greatness could be attained. The nineteenth-century Western economy created the socialist movement which was to rise against it, and the nationalism of the European peoples produced the Asian, African and Latin American nationalisms which, ever since 1914, have challenged the white man's rule.

For those who live in the midst of a system which is being threatened by two revolutions, it is not enough to examine each of these two revolutions separately. Two forces fighting the same adversary tend to conclude alliances and even to merge. This is particularly true of the two movements which are now rising against the old West. One of these two movements — Communism — is admirably conscious of its own nature and aims, and seeks to conclude a permanent marriage with its colonial nationalist partner. And even though that

partner is hesitant and inclined to flirt with the enemy, the Communist suitor remains steady and persistent in his courtship. In view of this constant attempt on the part of Communism to "use" the national emancipation struggles for its own purposes, it is important to study the development and the forms of the relationship between the two movements.

To examine the relationship between Communism and revolutionary nationalism, it is easiest to start with an analysis of the former, and to inquire into Communism's policy toward colonial nationalism, taking the latter as the *object* of the former's policy, rather than the opposite. For while Communism is fully conscious of its purposes in regard to the colonies, the latter are far less conscious of their aims in regard to Communism. Marxism explains all strategic and tactical matters in rational terms, with which one may disagree but which one must not ignore. In order to understand Communist policies, a study of Marxist theory is essential. Obviously an ideology in itself cannot change the world, but when an active political force *interprets* all its actions in terms of a certain ideology and develops its strategy not only on the basis of objective events but also on that of overall ideological aims, then it becomes of fundamental importance to place that ideology — the *theory* — in the very center of one's investigation. Communism possesses a coherent theory, while colonial nationalism does not: therefore, Communism must become the starting point and the primary object of our study, and colonial nationalism its secondary object.

In placing my main emphasis on the study of the development of Leninist ideology, I do not mean to imply that Russian and Communist policies are *determined* solely, or even mainly, by ideological motives. They are not. Although the ideology plays a definite role in the formation of Soviet and Communist policies, it is itself conditioned by basic power motives and real interests. I am suggesting, in the course of my study, that these real interests have become, as a matter of fact, more and more narrow. From 1917 to 1921, the interests of what the Bolsheviks conceived to be the international working class were determinant in the shaping of their ideology and strategy. From 1921 on, the national interests of Soviet Russia became the essential determining factor. And finally, ever since the death of Lenin, the individual interests of ambitious men within Soviet Russia had an impact on the development of ideology and strategy. But in spite of this, all Communist power moves must be seen in the framework of the Leninist-Stalinist doctrine, which, created by real interests, becomes itself a determining force and in its turn plays a role in shaping the further development of the interests which produced it. Tawney has demonstrated that religion, transformed by the rise of capitalism, has in its turn influenced the further development of capitalism.¹ What was once a part of the superstructure (to use a Marxist term) moves down into the understructure, i.e., it becomes itself a determining element in what Gunnar Myrdal calls a process of

¹ Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.

“cumulative change”.² The study of Communist ideology, both as a *reflection* of real interests and as a determining *influence* on concrete policy-making, has been neglected by many authors, who interpret everything in terms of a rather abstract concept of pure “power”. Even if the ideology were only a *reflection* of interests and not a *shaper* of policies (which I believe it *also* is, to a limited extent), it would still constitute an important subject of study. The analysis of variations in Communist ideology enables us to arrive at a fairly accurate view of the real material and human processes underlying these variations, just as the fluctuations of sound waves enable the oceanographer to gauge variations in depth and to arrive at a view of the structure of the ocean bottom.

The historic period which I have intended to cover is that of 1917 to 1928. The former year is that of the Russian October Revolution and of the beginning of large-scale Communist agitation in the colonies and under-developed countries. The year 1928 marks the end of the period during which the International was an autonomous force in its own right. By 1928, Stalin had succeeded in liquidating all independent and oppositional trends inside the world Communist movement, and the Comintern had become a virtual organ of the Soviet State. Before 1928, one can speak of a *Bolshevik* policy, in which Soviet Russia and the International exist side by side. After that date, there remained only a *Soviet* policy, with the Comintern acting as an auxiliary of Russian diplomacy.

There is another reason for which I decided to end my study at the year 1928: after that date, Communist documentation becomes scarce and sometimes unreliable. All debates and divergencies of opinion which took place in the Communist ranks during the earlier years were published fully. After the consolidation of Stalinist power, however, only unanimous decisions were published, with no mention of the discussions which led up to them. Therefore, the historian begins to tread on unsteady ground as soon as he seeks to advance beyond the above-mentioned period.

Because of the importance of Marxist theory in the shaping of Bolshevik policy, it is impossible to start point-blank with the year 1917, however. An introductory section becomes necessary, presenting the ideological background to Russia's and the Comintern's policies. Lenin's theory on the national question must be examined. This, in its turn, requires a previous outlining of Marx' and Engels' thought on the same subject. Therefore, I could not avoid writing two chapters of historical introduction, to lead up to the year 1917, at which I had intended to start my study.

I have tried to present my subject in an entirely objective and dispassionate manner. My purpose is not to either attack or defend Communism, but simply to show, as accurately as possible, the various phases through which Bolshevik national-colonial policy passed before

² Gunnar Myrdal, *An International Economy*.

1928. The task of the social scientist is one of diagnosis, not of therapy: if my factual enumeration and interpretation of certain historical events can serve as a working tool to whomever wishes to deal with Communism — either to support it, or to fight it, or to coexist with it —, it will thereby fulfill its purpose, and whatever use may be made of it shall not concern me. If in the section dealing with the men who shaped Communist thought and policy, I tend to display different degrees of subjective sympathy, I hope that these appreciations cannot be interpreted as a deviation from scholarly objectivity. One cannot very well describe a man without implicitly showing a small degree of either liking or disliking.

I have based my study on original sources, while using articles and works only to complete certain basic information, and to collect facts which lie outside the very center of my own study. The basic sources which I have used can be grouped under two main headings: documents, and theoretical writings of those who played a direct part in the events which I have studied.

The documents are, mainly, the protocols of the various congresses, conferences and executive conferences of the International, as well as of some of its sections. Most of these documents have been published in bound volumes (some of them of awe-inspiring bulk) by the German, English or French publishing houses of the Comintern. Parts of them can also be found in the pages of the *International Press Correspondence* (*Inprekorr*, *Correspondance Internationale*), the Comintern's bi-weekly international periodical, as well as in the monthly *The Communist International*. The best editions of the bound protocols exist in German and English. These documents were all published at a time when the Comintern's intellectual honesty was complete, and constitute reliable and exact sources.

The objection will be raised, that the exclusive use of Communist sources may tend to obscure the truth and to produce a one-sided picture of events. But I use the Communist sources precisely for an understanding, not of the *events*, but of the ideological interpretations which the Leninists gave to their own policies. The Communist sources allow us to arrive at a view of Communism's *internal affairs*. To write the history of Communist ideology does not mean accepting it, and I do not confuse ideology with reality any more than I consider that ideology to constitute a sufficient explanation of world events. In each part of my study I first let the Bolsheviks speak for themselves, in order subsequently to suggest some of the power motives underlying their theoretical formulations.

In addition to the Comintern publications, I have gathered certain documents from collections of high scholarly integrity, such as Gankin-Fischer's *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, Brandt, Schwartz and Fairbank's *Documentary History of Chinese Communism*, Jane Degras' *The Communist International, Documents, 1919-1943*. I have refrained

from reproducing any documentary quotations found in the works of other authors without going back to check the original source.

The overall ideological framework, within which the more detailed tactical discussions and resolutions are placed, has been obtained from the theoretical works of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Rosa Luxemburg, Kautsky, Bukharin, Trotsky, etc. Marx's and Engels' correspondence, fully edited by Ryazanov and Adoratsky in the magnificent *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, has been of particular value. The British edition of Lenin's *Selected Works* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1936.) is reliable. Stalin's *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, Trotsky's *Die Permanente Revolution* and *L'Internationale communiste après Lénine*, Bukharin's *Imperialismus und Weltwirtschaft*, Rosa Luxemburg's "Junius Brochure", Bauer's, Renner's and Kautsky's books on the national problem, must be mentioned along with Marx's, Engels' and Lenin's writings as basic ideological documentation. These books can be supplemented by a certain number of articles written by the same authors in Marxist periodicals. *Die Neue Zeit*, edited by Karl Kautsky before World War I, is of particular interest and importance.

In addition to the many thousand pages of original source material which I examined, I read a good number of general works on communism, the Soviet Union, the International, and nationalism. The general structure of the works of Hugh Seton-Watson and Arthur Rosenberg, of Harold Isaacs, Isaac Deutscher, and Richard Pipes were highly stimulating, and served to clarify and organize my own thinking.

The fact that I based myself on sources of various origins and periods and trod on virgin ground as far as research is concerned, led me to carry out, at first, a work of compilation. Only after this was completed did I seek to establish the relationship between all the factors and to put them together in a coherent way. If my study should lack coherence or evenness in any of its parts, that would be partly due to the fact that I began my research without any preconceived ideas. I did not begin to seek interpretations or conclusions till the very end of my labors.

Like other students of communism, I have had to struggle against the contagion of Leninist-Stalinist style. Months and months spent in reading the peculiarly plodding and repetitious prose of Lenin, and especially of Stalin and Mao Tse-tung, have a telling effect on one's own writing. I have struggled against the temptation to adopt a style of similar dryness and heaviness. Perhaps this is still evident in certain parts, where my rather dry enumeration of facts gives way to sudden outbursts of more vivid imagery in my attempts to interpret and to conclude: the plodding workhorse of science suddenly unfolding the wings of Pegasus, as it were. If such should be the case, I nevertheless hope that the total result of my research and writing is readable.

CHAPTER I

MARX AND ENGELS ON THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

It seems like a paradox, that Marxist Socialism, which proclaimed that "the workers have no country", and which proposes to achieve a world-wide brotherhood of all men, should at the same time attach a great importance to the questions of national liberation and self-determination. In practice, few political thinkers and writers have spent as much time and invested as much effort in the study of national struggles, as did Marx and Engels. This apparent paradox can easily be explained by the dialectical character of Marxist thought.

Throughout their lives, Marx and Engels worked at the preparation of a proletarian revolution which would not break out evenly throughout the world, but which would be preceded by various intermediary stages in different countries. While they felt it to be necessary to prepare for the future socialist development by analyzing the general course of history and by drawing up programs; i.e., by plotting out the overall revolutionary program, they knew it to be equally important to carry out immediate reforms destined to hasten the oncome of the ultimate cataclysmic upheavals which would usher in the era of human brotherhood. Before the final proletarian revolution could come, the present had to be transformed so as to lay the necessary basis for it.

In 1848, when the *Communist Manifesto* was published, most of Europe was far from ready for the proletarian revolution as conceived by Marx. At that moment only two countries met the standards which the fathers of "scientific socialism" deemed essential for the realization of the workers' revolution. These countries were England and France. Only there could the complete domination of the bourgeois class be found. Only there were the social tensions being resolved into a simple equation composed of "two great, directly opposed classes: bourgeoisie and proletariat".¹ Most other countries of Europe were still in a semi-feudal stage of development, with industry in its infancy, with only a

¹ *Das Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*, p. 7.

numerically small proletariat, and with continued political domination by an aristocratic class which drew its sustenance from the ownership of land and the exploitation of peasant labor.

Marx and Engels therefore declared that the immediate task of the workers of these more backward countries lay in aiding the bourgeoisie — which was revolutionary in opposition to the aristocrats—to destroy feudalism. Only after the bourgeoisie had replaced the feudal rule by its own capitalist domination would the proletarians be able to launch their fight for socialism. Thus in Germany “as soon as the bourgeoisie takes up a revolutionary stand, the Communist Party fights in alliance with the bourgeoisie against absolute monarchy, against feudal land-ownership, and the petty bourgeoisie”.²

1. RELATIVISM IN THE EVALUATION OF NATIONAL MOVEMENTS.

In their efforts to aid the bourgeoisie of continental Europe to wrest power from the hands of the feudal aristocracy and to lay the foundation for the proletarian revolution, Marx and Engels quite naturally came to support all those nations in which bourgeois democratic development was relatively advanced, or which could somehow serve as a basis for such a development, as against those whose socio-political character was more nearly feudal, and which were hindering the overall advance of modern capitalism and democracy.

The national question sprang into the foreground of Marx's and Engels' thought in 1848, the year of continent-wide revolutionary fermentation. For Marx, the establishment of bourgeois democracy—which was the preliminary condition for the socialist revolution—was bound to take place in the framework of a national state.³ Since the socialists therefore had an interest in supporting the more bourgeois and democratic nations against the more reactionary ones, the European situation in 1848 presented itself to Marx in the following manner: Two reactionary empires, Russia and Austria, were keeping various developing nations with democratic aspirations under their direct rule and preventing their consolidation. The most important countries thus enslaved by the reactionary empires were Poland and Hungary. Russia and Austria were also rendering impossible the national and bourgeois unification of Germany and Italy, through direct and indirect intervention in the internal affairs of these countries.

Marx therefore supported the national movements directed against the Tsar and against the Habsburg monarchy. On the other hand, he condemned those national movements which were developing objectively

² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

³ For the bourgeoisie “centralizes (the means of production) and concentrates property in a few hands... Provinces... were unified into *one* nation, *one* government, *one* law...” *Manifest*, p. 12.

in the "wrong direction", and which could indirectly serve to strengthen, rather than to destroy, Tsarist and Habsburg despotism.

The democratic revolution of 1848 developed with particular vigor in Western Germany, Poland, Hungary, and German Austria. In Frankfurt, a national assembly of liberals and democrats gathered to draw up a constitution for a united Germany. In Poland, an insurrection broke out against Russian rule. In Vienna, liberals and democrats seized power. In Hungary, Kossuth raised the banner of freedom. Marx and Engels, passionately supporting these movements, fought for an international alliance of the democratic forces. Especially Germany and Poland must march together in order to achieve their respective aims. Liberated Germany must go to war against Russia, in order to support the emancipation struggle of Poland. Only a great democratic war against Tsarism could safeguard the national independence of both Germany and Poland, at the same time hastening the downfall of absolutism in Russia and increasing the revolutionary fever throughout the world.⁴

"Ever since Poland has been forced under the yoke", wrote Karl Marx, "the Poles have not ceased to show a revolutionary activity, thereby binding their oppressors all the more closely to the cause of counter-revolution. They forced them to uphold the feudal and patriarchal regime not only in Poland, but also in other countries that are subject to them. And particularly since the Cracow uprising of 1846, the struggle for Polish independence is at the same time the struggle of rural democracy, the only kind of democracy that can exist in the East of Europe, against patriarchal and feudal absolutism.

"As long as we help, therefore, to oppress the Polish nation, as long as a part of Poland remains chained to Prussia, as long as we ourselves remain chained to Russia, we shall be unable to radically break patriarchal and feudal absolutism in our own realm. The re-establishment of a democratic Poland is the most essential condition for the reconstruction of a democratic Germany."⁵

And Marx goes on to declare that only a war against Tsarism can carry the liberation of Germany to its full conclusion. Since the German revolution was bourgeois-national, it must employ the power of the nation state to unfold itself fully. Revolution and reaction both appear, for the time being, in state incarnations. Germany and Poland, carriers of revolution, must smash Russia, carrier of reaction. As the French bourgeoisie of 1789-1793 carried out its revolution partly by waging national war against the powers representing the *ancien régime*, thus Germany, too, must secure her freedom by the methods of Jacobinism, including national war. For the time being the national problem was foremost in the mind of Marx. The social question would be dependent on, and conditioned by, the elementary requirement of independent and sovereign national existence.

⁴ Cf. K. Marx, *La question polonaise devant l'Assemblée de Francfort*, p. 29.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Karl Marx described what the democratic war against Tsarist Russia would have meant: "It would have meant a break with our odious past, a frank, real and categorical break; it would have meant the true liberation and the true unification of Germany; it would have meant the erection of a democratic regime on the ruins of feudalism, and also, for the bourgeoisie, the disappearance of its ephemeral dreams of power.⁶ War against Russia offered us the only means of safeguarding our honor, and of serving our own interests in our relations with our Slavonic neighbors, and particularly with Poland."⁷

While Marx and Engels thoroughly supported the national liberation movements directed against the Tsar, their attitude was entirely different in regard to the movements of the Czechs and South Slavs, who also rose in open revolt in 1848. They showed nothing but dislike and condemnation for the national stirrings in Bohemia, Croatia and Serbia.⁸ At first sight, this attitude appears to be in complete contradiction to the stand Marx and Engels took toward Poland. Were not the Czechs and South Slavs also fighting for their national existence against foreign oppression? Marx's and Engels' position seems especially odd if one considers the fact that Bohemia was already at that time economically more developed, and more bourgeois, than the feudal and agricultural Hungary, whose independence movement Marx endorsed.

The answer is quite clear in terms of the spirit of dialectical relativism with which the fathers of communism analyzed all questions. There was never any doubt in their minds as to the subordination of all values to the single, absolute, supreme value of the proletarian revolution. In Marx's dialectical materialism ("Hegel's dialectical idealism turned upside down"), history advances toward the supreme goal of communism through a series of dialectical phases. In a dialectical system of thought and strategy, any reality, any value, which appears at a given moment, can and will be refuted by its antithesis. All values are therefore strictly relative, bound to disappear in a new synthesis, which in its turn will eventually serve as the thesis of a new phase of development. Ultimately only one absolute value remains: the final synthesis, beyond which all contradiction ceases — Hegel's self-fulfillment of the World Spirit, materialized by Marx, in sociological terms, into the achievement of the classless society, the "association in which the free development of each shall be the condition for the free development of all".⁹ Obviously that which exists relatively is subordinate to that which exists absolutely. That which represents only a passing phase is subordinate to the ultimate fulfillment in which the dialectical process dissolves itself into the last, infinite and eternal synthesis. The imperfect present

⁶ Meaning, undoubtedly, the more conservative, Directoire-type, sections of the upper bourgeoisie.

⁷ K. Marx, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁸ F. Engels, "Germany: Revolution and Counter-Revolution", Marx, Engels, *Selected Works*, v. 2, pp. 87-93.

⁹ Marx and Engels, *Manifest*, p. 35.

is subordinate to the perfect future. The passing phase of the bourgeois democratic state is therefore subordinate to the ultimate aim of the proletarian revolution. For in the dialectical view of history, a movement or phase of development never exists in isolation, but only with reference to the total forward march of the human species toward its communist future. A partial, localized revolution thus acquires its progressive and positive nature only in as far as it furthers the overall conquest of the land where milk and honey flow.

For Marx and Engels, the nationalist movements of the Czechs and South Slavs lacked the liberating and revolutionary significance which such movements have whenever they are directed against a feudal empire, for the simple reason that these movements were *not* directed in the first place against feudal empires. While the Poles were rebelling directly against the Tsar, and the Austrian and Hungarian liberals directly against the Habsburg Kaiser, the Czechs were rising primarily against the German Austrians as a nation, and the South Slavs against the Magyars as a nation. Therefore, theirs was objectively a reactionary movement. By attacking the German Austrians and the Magyars at the very moment in which these nations underwent a liberal transformation, the Czechs and South Slavs could be said to serve objectively as tools of the Tsar and the Habsburg emperor. This evaluation of the Czech and South Slav movements was proved true by the facts. The Tsar's troops marched into Hungary and repressed the Kossuth revolution with the aid of Croatian auxiliaries — who hated the Magyars more than the Habsburg empire — and General Windischgraetz stormed revolutionary Vienna with the support of Czech troops — who saw in the supranational emperor a protector against the hegemony of the Austrian Germans.

Nevertheless, Marx and Engels definitely underestimated the importance of the Czech and South Slav nations in *absolute* terms as well. Engels believed, — and in this he echoed a very typical Teutonic sentiment —, that the Slavs in the Habsburg Empire were bound to be germanized and integrated in the “superior” German culture. An attempt by these “dying” nations to resist assimilation would be reactionary at *any* time, and not only in 1848.¹⁰ Apparently it never occurred to Marx and Engels that the Austrian and Magyar liberals might have come to terms with the Czechs and South Slavs (thus weakening pro-Tsarist Pan-Slavism), by recognizing the existence of these nations and by granting them autonomy and national rights in the framework of a confederation. Doctrinaire centralism and ignorance of the true nature of the Slavs prevented them from envisaging such a solution.

On the other hand, they cannot be accused of showing contempt toward the Slavs in general. They supported the Poles, and respected the Russians for their “energy”¹¹ (though they hated that energy as

¹⁰ Engels, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

long as it served the interests of autocracy). They also recognized that the *Serbian* South Slavs had a historic role to play against the Turks. This is shown by a little-known article written by Engels in 1853, and published under Marx's name in the *New York Tribune*.¹²

In that article, Marx and Engels analyse the future role of the South Slavs — whom but recently they had so violently condemned — as follows :

While it was important to keep Russia away from the Straits, this could not be done simply by preserving the status quo in the Ottoman Empire. "The very diplomatic system which has been set up to prevent Russian expansion, forces ten million Greek Christians in European Turkey to turn to Russia for protection and aid". If, on the other hand, the Balkan peninsula were to become independent, it would constitute a bulwark of freedom against Russian despotism. But Engels believed that such a liberation of the Balkan peninsula could only be carried out by a new Europe, regenerated through revolution.¹³ He goes on to say that European Turkey is the natural heritage of the "South Slav race".¹⁴ This is so because "their rivals are Turkish or Albanian barbarians, who have for a long time proved to be complete enemies of all progress. In opposition to them, the South Slavs are the sole carriers of civilization in the interior of the country. They have not formed a nation yet, but in Serbia they already constitute the forceful and relatively cultured nucleus of a nation. The Serbs have their own history, their own literature... During the past twenty years they have made great cultural progress, and the Christians of Thrace, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Bosnia look to them as the focal point around which they will all rally in future struggles for independence. It can be affirmed that the direct influence of the Russians on the Turkish Slavs has diminished in direct proportion to the development of Serbia and of the Serbian nationality".¹⁵

The interests of the South Slavs were entirely different from those of Russia, Engels went on to explain. Russia was interested in establishing a monopoly of trade in Central Asia and other regions, while the South Slavs "even now are very much interested in importing the products of the West into the Eastern markets". This meant to Engels that the South Slavs were the natural carriers of Western liberal and democratic influences, in opposition to both Tsarist and Ottoman tyranny. It should therefore be the duty of all democratic elements in Europe to aid in the formation of an independent Slavonic Balkan state, which would be a much stronger bulwark against Russian encroachments than the decadent Turkish Empire could ever be.

With the same relativism and flexibility of spirit, Marx and Engels

¹² Re-edited by N. Ryazanov in *Die Neue Zeit*, April 1, 1910, pp. 4-12, "Was soll aus der Türkei in Europa werden?"

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

were willing to change their attitude toward Poland, if that country should cease to have an objective revolutionary significance as against Russian despotism. In 1851, Engels began to feel doubts about the importance of Poland. Following his tendency of expressing objective judgments in very passionate language in his private correspondence, he wrote to Marx:¹⁶

"The more I think about this business, the clearer it becomes to me that the Poles are a *nation foutue*, and can only be made use of as an instrument until Russia herself is swept into the agrarian revolution. From that moment on, Poland will have absolutely no more reason to exist. The Poles have never done anything in history except to display a brave, quarrelsome stupidity. And one cannot point to a single instance in which Poland represented progress successfully, even if only in relation to Russia, or did anything at all of historic importance. Russia, on the other hand, is really progressive in relation to the East. For all its baseness and Slavonic dirt, Russian domination is a civilizing element on the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, and among the Bashkirs and Tatars, and Russia has absorbed far more civilizing and industrial elements than the Poles, whose whole nature is that of the idle cavalier... Poland has never been able to nationalize foreign elements... (while) every German-Russian of the second generation is a striking example of Russia's ability to russify Germans and Jews...

"The only 'immortal' thing about the Poles was their baseless quarrelsome noisiness...

"...I am certain that revolution will come about in Russia before it does in Poland, owing to the national character¹⁷ and to Russia's more advanced bourgeois elements. What are Warsaw and Cracow compared to Petersburg, Moscow, Odessa, etc..."

Adding that the next Polish uprising was bound to be numerically weak, Engels concluded with the shattering statement: "A nation which can raise at best twenty thousand to thirty thousand men does not count. And Poland can certainly not raise much more."

Marx absolutely agreed with Engels on the relativity of the importance of each nation. He, too, was only interested in a particular nation, as long as it could serve as an effective basis for revolution. Both Marx and Engels changed their attitude toward a given nation as soon as it ceased to play a certain historic role. In the particular case of Poland, however, Marx did not share Engels' misgivings. He devoted a great deal of study and observation to that country, and in 1856 expressed anew his positive stand toward Poland, in slight disagreement with his partner: "What has decided me definitely for Poland...

¹⁶ *Gesamtausgabe*, III, 1, 204-208.

¹⁷ Engels, in private life, often used thoroughly un-materialist concepts such as this. Since he "let off steam" on occasions like this, some of his verbal violence should be taken *cum grano salis*.

is the historical fact that the intensity and vitality of all revolutions since 1789 can be gauged pretty accurately by their relation to Poland. Poland is their 'external thermometer'." ¹⁸

In 1848, Marx and Engels had been favorable to the Italian liberation and unification movement, and had backed Mazzini. But they sharply criticized and attacked Mazzini's program of 1851, in which he called on the Italian people for an immediate insurrection. Marx pointed out that in 1851 a nationalist insurrection movement carried out by the Italian bourgeoisie and intellectual elite would only serve the interests of Austria, by giving her a pretext for tightening her hold on the Italian provinces. ¹⁹ Such an uprising would be doomed to failure since it lacked the social, anti-feudal content which alone justifies the struggle for the nation state. The only way in which an Italian insurrection could at that moment serve the interests of progress and have a chance of success, would be to base its strength on the peasantry, and to combine the national with an agrarian revolution. If the Italian nationalists should draw the peasants into the movement, by agitating for a drastic land reform and for the immediate abolition of sharecropping (*mezzadria*), their initiative would acquire a highly positive significance. If, on the other hand, the bourgeois nationalists should neglect the social aspect of the revolution and follow Mazzini's program, Austria could not only repress the movement by force, but she could also undermine all future chances for Italian independence, by granting to the peasants the reforms which the nationalists denied them. The Austrians could liberate the Italian peasants, in order to punish the squirearchy for its disloyalty, and for demagogic reasons, and could thus transform a potentially revolutionary class into a bastion of conservatism. ²⁰

This remarkable criticism of Mazzini's tactics shows Marx's continual consciousness of the oneness and continuity of the revolutionary process. National revolution could be justified only if it had a social content. This social content could lie in the interests of a national bourgeoisie (as in the case of Poland and Hungary), and especially in the objective stimulation which the revolution would give to social movements in other countries. Marx refused to look at any nation as anything but a basis for a certain progressive social transformation, or as an auxiliary agent in a social upheaval taking place in another country.

Another national question which for a while attracted the attention of Marx and Engels was that of the United States of America. When the Civil War broke out, Marx immediately decided that the North should be supported by the international working class, inasmuch as it represented the bourgeois and liberal order against the feudal and

¹⁸ Marx-Engels, *Correspondence*. Letter of December 2, 1856, p. 95.

¹⁹ Marx to Wedemeyer, September 11, 1851, *Correspondence*, p. 45. and to Engels, September 13, 1851, *ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁰ Marx to Engels, September 13, 1851, *Correspondence*, p. 47.

slave-holding South. The industrial bourgeoisie of the North was able to unify the country and to turn it into a new basis for proletarian and socialist development. Nevertheless, Marx and Engels sharply criticized certain manifestations of sordid self-interest on the part of the Northern capitalists, and only lent their total, unmitigated support to the Unionist cause after Lincoln proclaimed the emancipation of the slaves. The abolition of slavery, for them, gave to the American national-bourgeois movement its needed revolutionary content. Marx and Engels hoped for a victory of the North not only because of its progressive bearing on the social development of the United States itself, but also because the decline of Southern cotton production would constitute a grievous blow to the English textile industry. Any event which might bring about an economic crisis in England would serve to hasten the proletarian revolution in Western Europe, so that Marx and Engels welcomed all such events with a feeling of mildly ghoulish glee.²¹

But it was probably in the case of Ireland that Marx and Engels expressed their ideas about the inter-relation between the national and social problems with the greatest clarity. Engels investigated the nature of English rule in Ireland as early as 1856, when he wrote to Marx :

“One may consider Ireland to be the first English colony, and one which, because of its nearness, is being governed in the old-fashioned manner: one begins to notice here that the so-called freedom of the English citizens is based on the oppression of the colonies. In no other country have I seen so many gendarmes, and the Prussian type of rum-soaked gendarme has attained its highest perfection in this heavily armed constabulary.”²²

At that time Marx and Engels still believed that usually a colony or oppressed country could only be liberated through a revolution taking place in the oppressor country. They therefore felt that Ireland could only be free after the English workers overthrew their own bourgeoisie and abolished the colonial system. Engels in particular was quite vocal in regard to the apparent hopelessness of the Irish national cause.²³ But ten years later, when the stirrings of the Fenians had come to play an important political role, Marx came to the conclusion that the immediate secession of Ireland from Great Britain was not only feasible but absolutely necessary for the further development of the revolution-

²¹ C.f. Letters of October 29, May 12, July 30, 1862, in *Gesamtausgabe* III, 3, pp. 68, 82, 105-106, and *Correspondence*, p. 140.

²² May 23, 1856, *Gesamtausgabe*, III, 2, pp. 136-138.

²³ “The land is totally ruined... The people thereby have acquired a special character, and in spite of all Irish-national fanaticism these chaps have, they don’t feel at home in their own country anymore. Ireland for the Saxon!... The Irishman knows that he cannot compete with the Englishman... How often have the Irish tried to achieve something, and each time they’ve been crushed, politically and industrially. Through consequent oppression they have been turned into a totally degenerate nation, and their main occupation now consists in providing England, America, and Australia with whores,... pimps,... swindlers, beggars, and other scum.”

any cause in Europe. "I used to think the separation of Ireland from England impossible. I now think it inevitable, although after the separation there may come *federation*." ²⁴

As it happened on various other occasions as well, Marx thereby corrects Engels' more rash and emotional judgments. He explains that the separation of Ireland from England was inevitable, since oppression had taken on unusually obnoxious forms on the Green Isle. Nowhere was a policy of expropriation of the native peasantry carried on with such brutality as in Ireland. ²⁵ To convert farm land into pasture, the English landlords were practicing a policy of forcible mass evictions.

In November 1867, the Irish national problem, and the attitude of the world proletariat toward the Fenian movement, were debated at the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association in London. For the first time, the socialist workers were faced with the question of giving mass support to a nationalist insurrectionary movement. Marx pointed out that English economic and political oppression in Ireland had entered a new phase since the repeal of the Corn Law in 1846. Conversion of tillage into pasture, with the resulting expropriation of smallholders, meant an accentuation of the social character of oppression. Since the social character of oppression had become more marked, the Irish national revolutionary movement — Fenianism — had also, by reaction, acquired a pronounced social tinge. In fact, Marx believed that Fenianism had absorbed a positively *socialist* tendency, demanding more than simply re-appropriation of the soil. ²⁶ He argued that in supporting the Irish independence struggle, the English workers would aid a new socialist party to develop into maturity. And he concluded:

"What the Irish need is: 1) Self-government and independence from England. 2) An agrarian revolution. 3) *Protective tariffs against England . . .*" ²⁷

As an independent and industrial nation defended by tariffs, Ireland could come to be a new basis for socialist revolutionary development.

But a new important idea on the importance of the Irish independence struggle was added by Engels, who in his turn began a serious study of this question. Engels gave birth to a thought which has come to be one of the fundamental tenets of later Marxism, and which Marx had already touched upon twenty years earlier in his appeal to the Frankfurt Assembly. This thought is the following: That the liberation and consolidation of a given nation is not only in the interests of that

²⁴ Marx to Engels, November 2, 1867. *Correspondence*, p. 228.

²⁵ Marx remarked that this policy was worse than anything the Russians or Prussians ever practiced: "The Russians only confiscate for political reasons; the Prussians in West Prussia buy out." Letter to Engels, November 2, 1867. *Correspondence*, p. 228.

²⁶ Letter to Engels, November 30, 1867. *Gesamtausgabe*, III, 3, pp. 456-457, and *Correspondence*, p. 229.

²⁷ *Gesamtausgabe*, III, 3, pp. 456-457, and *Correspondence*, p. 229.

nation itself, and in that of the overall socialist future of mankind at large, but also very directly in that of the workers of the ruling and oppressing nation. In the same spirit in which Marx had stated in 1849 that the oppression of Poland, by stimulating Polish uprisings, tied the Russians and Prussians "all the more closely to the cause of counter-revolution", ²⁸ Engels now wrote, in 1869:

"Irish history shows one how disastrous it is for a nation when it has subjugated another nation. All the abominations of the English have their origin in the Irish Pale. I have still to work through the Cromwellian period, but this much seems certain to me, that things would have taken another turn in England but for the necessity for military rule in Ireland and the creation of a new aristocracy there." ²⁹

Marx took up this idea and re-stated it in his own words, in a letter to Dr. Kugelmann on November 29, 1869:

"I have become more and more convinced that [the English working class] can never do anything decisive here in England until it separates its policy with regard to Ireland in the most definite way from the policy of the ruling classes, until it not only makes common cause with the Irish, but actually takes the initiative in dissolving the Union established in 1801 and replacing it by a new federal relationship. ³⁰ And indeed, this must be done, not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a demand made in the interests of the English proletariat. If not, the English people will remain tied to the leading strings of their ruling classes, because it must join with them in a common front against Ireland." ³¹

And in a letter to Engels:

"The way I shall put forward this matter is this: that quite apart from all phrases about 'international' and 'humane' justice for Ireland, — which are to be taken for granted in the International Council — *it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working classes to get rid of their present connection with Ireland.* And this is my most complete conviction, for reasons which in part I cannot tell the English workers themselves. For a long time I believed that it would be possible to overthrow the Irish regime by English working class ascendancy. I always expressed this point of view in the *New York Tribune*. Deeper study has convinced me of the opposite. The English working class will *never accomplish anything* before it has got rid of Ireland." ³²

And Marx expressed the same thought once more, in its most concise form, when he wrote to Meyer and Vogt, a few months later:

²⁸ See below, p. 3.

²⁹ Letter to Marx, October 24, 1869. *Correspondence*, p. 264.

³⁰ Marx usually abhorred federalism. "As a gruesome example, you can mention Switzerland", wrote he to Engels in 1853, and he violently disagreed with Proudhon and Bakunin on that question, but in this case he accepted it as a lesser evil.

³¹ *Correspondence*, p. 278.

³² *Gesamtausgabe* III, 4, p. 258, and *Correspondence*, pp. 280-281.

"After occupying myself with the Irish question for many years, I have come to the conclusion that the decisive blow against the English ruling classes (and it will be decisive for the workers' movement all over the world) cannot be delivered *in England but only in Ireland.*"³³

This represents a great change from Marx's and Engels' position in 1853, when they believed that revolution in the advanced oppressor countries would precede the liberation of the subject nations. In earlier years, Marx and Engels had tended to underestimate the force of insurgent nationalism. They had looked at it as a possible auxiliary force in bringing about democratic or socialist revolution in the dominant countries, but had thought it likely that the liberating movement would start in the ruling center. Actually the experience of 1848 had already shown that it was impossible to "impose liberty" on a subject nation from above. Kossuth had tried to do so in regard to the Magyar-dominated Slavs, only to find that nationalism was stronger than social consciousness, and that the only way to win the friendship of the subject nationalities would have consisted, not in promising them equality of rights within the old state, but in granting them autonomy. Marx and Engels failed to grasp this truth in 1848-1849, but they discovered it in the case of Ireland, in 1867. In 1853, Marx was entirely "Western", in the sense of conceiving of the proletarian revolution in the industrial heartlands as an immediate possibility. By 1869-70, he had become "Eastern" in so far as he saw that the national democratic revolution of the underdeveloped agricultural areas would have to precede the socialist transformation of the ruling and colonizing countries.

Not all Marxists were aware, however, of this change in emphasis. Ignoring the fact that Marx and Engels had adopted a new orientation, and saw the bourgeois democratic revolution as preceding and conditioning the proletarian revolution, many socialists continued to hold the view that the proletarian revolution of the industrial countries was immediately feasible. The controversy between the believers in "proletarian revolution first" and the believers in "national democratic revolution first" continued far into the twentieth century, and dominated the ideological and tactical disputes between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, between Lenin and Pyatakov, between Stalin and Trotsky. While the Bolsheviks, in a sense, were to base their doctrine on that of the "Eastern" Marx of 1869, the Mensheviks and Rosa Luxemburg remained faithful to the "Western" Marx of 1853.

2. THE GERMAN QUESTION.

The relativism of Marx' and Engels' evaluation of national problems was put to the test in the case of their own native land, Germany. In

³³ April 9, 1870. *Correspondence*, p. 288.

1848 they had enthusiastically supported the tendencies toward German democratic unification, as the condition for bourgeois rule and for the revolutionary development of the proletarian class struggle. After the defeat of the 1848 revolution in Germany, they continued to fight for the national unification of the country, hoping that the main force tending in that direction would come from liberal Western Germany rather than from autocratic Prussia.

In the course of the 'sixties, the German socialists became aware of the importance of Bismarck. Opinions differed. While Lassalle began to tend toward a position of support of Bismarck, Marx and Engels opposed him. For them, a unification of Germany carried out by the sword of the Iron Chancellor would have an autocratic, militarist, pro-Russian content, and would therefore fail to meet the requirements for a bourgeois-democratic revolution. On the occasion of the Polish uprising of 1863 — which the Prussians helped to crush — Marx decided that a Bismarckian unification of Germany would be diametrically opposed to the ideals of a bourgeois democratic transformation of the country. He wrote to Engels:

"...Bismarck and Vincke do in fact *truly* represent the principle of the Prussian state; [and] the State of Prussia (a very different thing from Germany) can exist neither *without* the present Russia nor *with* an independent Poland. The whole of Prussian history leads to this conclusion... As therefore the existence of Poland is necessary to Germany but impossible alongside of Prussia, *this State of Prussia must be demolished*.³⁴ In other words, the Polish question is only a fresh occasion for proving that it is impossible to further German interests as long as the Hohenzollern dynastic state exists."³⁵

Prussia and Germany irreconcilable opposites! Prussia to be destroyed so that Germany could be! Engels agreed.³⁶ At the same time, Marx and Engels expressed their violent disapproval of Ferdinand Lassalle and his followers, who were beginning to turn more and more toward Bismarck.³⁷ When an emissary of Bismarck called on Marx in 1867 and tried to persuade him to give propagandistic support to the Iron Chancellor's efforts, he refused, according to a letter to Engels.³⁸ There is little reason to doubt Marx's sincerity in this case. If he had reached an understanding with Bismarck, he certainly would not have hesitated to admit it to his friend Engels.

But however great Marx's and Engels' dislike of Prussia and of Bismarck might be, they could not but welcome any event which objectively led in the direction of German unification. When the Austro-Prussian war broke out in 1866, Karl Marx pointed out the importance

³⁴ Our italics.

³⁵ Letter of March 24, 1863. *Correspondence*, pp. 145-146.

³⁶ "(It would be) bad enough for Germany and Europe if Berlin arrived at the head of the movement." June 11, 1863. *Correspondence*, p. 150.

³⁷ Marx to Kugelman, February 23, 1865. *Correspondence*, pp. 193-196.

³⁸ Marx to Engels, April 24, 1867. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 3, pp. 382-384.

of a Prussian victory for the future of Germany. As the tension between Prussia and Bonapartist France increased, the German socialists, including Marx and Engels, were seized by hesitations in regard to the attitude to be assumed in an eventual Franco-German conflict. On the one hand, Napoléon III was considered by the socialists of the whole world as one of the main forces of reaction, ranking second after the Russian tsar in that domain. At the same time, German unification was felt to be a desirable aim, for the future of the German working class. On the other hand, Bismarck and his Prussia were repulsive to socialists and democrats of all countries. If Bismarck should wage war against France in order to accomplish the unification of Germany, should the German socialists actively join in such a war, which would imply shedding the blood of French workers? On the part of the German socialists, two positions were possible. The first position was that held by the German Socialist leaders August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht, who refused to endorse a Prussian dynastic war, notwithstanding the positive influences which a Prussian victory could have on German social development. The second consisted in wholeheartedly supporting the German war effort, in view of the fact that even a Prussian-dominated Germany was an infinitely better basis for the struggle of the German working class than the old Confederation. Marx and Engels definitely held this latter position at the outbreak of the war. To them, the struggle for German unification seemed progressive even though it was led by Bismarck. They defined the Prussian campaign as a "defensive" action. They saw the future, united Germany with her strong Marxist party defending herself against French attempts to keep her weak and decentralized. Furthermore they distrusted and underestimated the French working class—which, unlike the German, was not Marxist but Proudhonist—and probably felt that the defeat of France would not ruin any revolutionary possibilities. Little did they realize that France was far more "pregnant with revolution" than Germany would ever be. But they clearly indicated that their support of Bismarck was not unconditional and absolute. Marx wrote on July 23, 1870, in an adress to the international working class:

"If the German working class allows the present war to lose its strictly defensive character and to degenerate into a war against the French people, then victory and defeat will be equally harmful... Whatever sympathy the Germans can rightfully claim in a defensive war against a Bonapartist attack, they would as quickly lose if they allowed the German government to summon the aid of the Cossacks or even as much as to accept it." ³⁹

Before Sedan, as long as it could be argued that the war had the purpose of establishing German unification and destroying the influence of Bonaparte, Marx and Engels wholeheartedly supported the German side. With his usual exuberance, the latter voiced his joy at German

³⁹ *Correspondence*, p. 298.

military successes in words which might have been mistaken for those of an inflamed nationalist.⁴⁰

In the meantime, Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, inside Germany, were calling on the workers not to support Bismarck and his bourgeois-bureaucratic class in the offensive against France. In so doing, they were taking a purely socialist standpoint, characteristic of the workers of an advanced industrial country. Unlike Marx and Engels, they acted on the assumption that the phase of the ultimate struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie had already arrived, and that their country was no longer at the stage of bourgeois and national revolution. Engels furiously disagreed with Liebknecht. While recognizing that the latter's stand would be wonderfully revolutionary in a well-established industrial society, he denied that Germany had already passed beyond the phase of bourgeois-national struggle. He was convinced that the time for non-cooperation with the German ruling class had not yet come. Though Engels also was extremely critical of Bismarck, he nevertheless maintained that the German bourgeoisie, even Bismarck-led, still had a revolutionary role to play, as long as the reactionary Bonaparte sat on the throne of France. The young German state had to be defended against a Bonapartist counterattack, and it was in the vital interest of all workers of the world to consolidate and preserve a state which represented the framework for an ulterior socialist revolution. If Bonaparte won the war, Engels wrote, Germany would be broken for years or even generations, and in that case an independent working class movement would be out of the question in that country.⁴¹ Engels believed that Bismarck, in spite of his conservative character, was objectively working for the socialist future of Germany and building a fighting-ground for the workers. Furthermore, argued Engels, it was by no means certain that the German Reich would always remain Prussian and militarist in spirit. The liberal South-West Germans would undoubtedly constitute a force able to counterbalance the Prussians in the national parliament. Engels also agreed with Marx in that a German-Russian war was possible. In case of such a war, Bismarck would not fail to accomplish his "national duties"; he would probably take a step to the Left. Therefore Liebknecht's stand against the whole of the Bismarckian policy — based on the simple fact that the Iron Chancellor was not one of the most democratic men — could be characterized as dangerous nonsense.⁴²

In opposition to Liebknecht's purism, Engels proposed to the German workers the following tactical program:

- "1. Join the German national movement... and support it as long as it limits itself to the defense of Germany...
- "2. Emphasize at the same time the difference between German-national and Prussian-dynastic interests.

⁴⁰ Letter to Marx, August 5, 1870. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 4, p. 356.

⁴¹ Letter to Marx, August 15, 1870. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 4, pp. 365-367.

⁴² Letter to Marx, August 15, 1870. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 4, pp. 365-367.

- "3. Oppose any annexation of Alsace and Lorraine...
- "4. As soon as a republican, non-chauvinist government shall be in power in Paris, work for an honorable peace with it.
- "5. Constantly emphasize the unity of interests of the German and French workers, who did not approve of the war, and who are not waging war on each other."⁴³

Marx expressed his wholehearted agreement with Engels. He pointed out that all political events centering along the Second Empire had finally, in a roundabout way, achieved the national aims of 1848.⁴⁴ What had been the revolutionary objective of the most radical wings of European democracy in 1848—the autonomy and consolidation of Hungary, Italy, Germany—was fulfilled in a non-revolutionary way during the years leading up to 1870. These national results were progressive in comparison to the previous state of affairs, but Marx indicated their shortcomings as well. The shortcomings were inherent in the social and ideological background of the men who were responsible for these political events. Since German and Italian unification had not been brought about by the democratic middle classes and workers of 1848, but by socially conservative bourgeois groups, the new unified states were not exactly what Marx had hoped for. He once more expressed his old idea: that Germany could never be really independent and democratic unless she fought a liberating war against Tsarist Russia.⁴⁵ If such a war should come about, Germany would be forced into an objectively revolutionary role, for she would only be able to defeat Russia if she liberated Poland in the process. And Marx speculated:

"If our Handsome William (Kaiser Wilhelm I) stays alive for a bit longer, we might live to hear his proclamations to the Poles. When God wants to do something particularly great, says old Carlyle, he always picks out the most stupid people to do it."⁴⁶

In view of these considerations regarding the progressive objective role of Bismarck's German Empire, Marx, like Engels, opposed Liebknecht's left-wing purism. He wrote that Liebknecht's attitude indicated a "lack of dialectics" in thinking.⁴⁷ Liebknecht was mistaking one dialectical phase for another and confusing the national-democratic with the socialist revolution. Nevertheless, Marx did not forget for a moment that France, too, could be the scene of a socialist upheaval. The German war against France must remain simply a war against Bonapartism, and must under no circumstances be allowed to degenerate into an

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Letter to Engels, August 8, 1870. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 4, pp. 358-359.

⁴⁵ "This kind of movement will be finished only if there should be a scrap *between the Prussians and the Russians*. This is by no means improbable." *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Letter to Engels, August 17, 1870. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 4, p. 369.

aggression against the French people. If Napoleon III should fall, and if Germany should then continue the war with imperialist and annexationist intentions—then Wilhelm Liebknecht's position would become correct; then Bismarck would have to be fought tooth and nail, and, what is more, France would have to be supported.

That position is understandable, and seems convincing from a socialist standpoint. It must be said however, that even the initial support to Bismarck was based on a dubious analysis of the situation. Marx and Engels believed in democracy as a desirable state of affairs and one which offered the workers their best opportunities. They identified the bourgeois and national revolution with democracy because such had been the case in England and France. They failed to seize the special meaning of the Bismarckian experience. As Jules Monnerot has pointed out,⁴⁸ the "Prussification" of Germany was an instance of a bureaucratic power group *substituting* itself for the middle class—which was too weak to unify and organize the country—and establishing a dictatorship based to some extent on that middle class, but capable of independent and anti-democratic action. The difference between a bourgeois revolution and a bureaucratic "revolution" acting as *Statthalter* of the bourgeoisie was not perceived by Marx. It is the difference between democracy and totalitarianism. Bismarck's state was the direct—albeit moderate and humane—predecessor of totalitarianism. As such, it was incompatible with the socialism envisaged by Marx, which was—regardless of later re-interpretations—democratic.⁴⁹

The day on which Marx, Engels, Liebknecht, Bebel and all other German socialists found themselves united in opposing Bismarck and his war soon came. On September 3, 1870, Napoléon III fell into the hands of his enemies at Sedan. Marx and Engels felt that *their* war was over. The initial German objective, which had deserved full proletarian support, had been attained: Germany was unified and the French autocrat had fallen. Already on September 13, Engels forcefully indicated that the spirit of progress had forsaken its German vehicle, by stating that: "If this goes on, even for another week, we shall have to come to the conclusion that *both* parties [Germans and French] can go and [indulge in unprintable activities]..."⁵⁰

Until the end of September, Marx and Engels hoped that peace would be concluded. And they were mortally afraid lest the French workers, among whom a revolutionary spirit was growing, should start an insurrection before an armistice was signed. A French proletarian

⁴⁸ J. Monnerot, *Sociologie du Communisme*, pp. 354-357.

⁴⁹ Marx clearly assumed that the dictatorship of the proletariat would mean the direct rule of the many over the few. In his criticism of Blanqui, he warned against undemocratic revolutions made "for" the people by a minority. See also J. Plamenatz, *German Marxism and Russian Communism*, p. xv.

⁵⁰ Letter to Marx, September 13, 1870. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 4, pp. 383-84.

uprising before the conclusion of peace, or at least of an armistice, would place the Germans in a totally counter-revolutionary position, and might lead the French workers themselves to slide back into a nationalist perspective, since they would be fighting a foreign invader instead of their own bourgeoisie.⁵¹

But by the end of the year, both Marx and Engels had decided that henceforth the principle of historical progress had passed from Germany to France. Now that the reactionary emperor had fallen from power, France was a republic fighting for her national existence. Karl Marx came to this conclusion earlier than Engels, who wrote highly complimentary remarks about the French "government of national defense", but by January 1871 they both agreed that France deserved unconditional support against the German invaders. Marx began to hope, months before the proclamation of the Paris Commune, that the French working class would seize the leadership of the national war and thus bring about a repetition of the Jacobin movement. The events of 1793 could be repeated in 1871. On January 16, Marx wrote in a letter to the *Daily News*:

"France—and fortunately her cause is far from desperate—at this moment fights not only for her own national independence, but also for the liberty of Germany and Europe."⁵²

According to oral statements by Vaillant, Engels at the same time even went as far as to offer his services to the French government, as a tactical advisor.⁵³

Marx's and Engels' relativist and dialectical appreciation of national movements was thus confirmed in the case of German unification and the Franco-Prussian war. As long as they saw Germany as an objective carrier of historical progress, they supported it, but as soon as France became a republic, they changed sides.

After the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine, Marx and Engels steadfastly defended the right of these territories to self-determination. But they never ceased to subordinate national demands to those of the international revolution. After the repression of the Paris Commune, they judged that France, for the time being, had fallen back into a hopelessly conservative position, and that Germany, with its militant workers' movement, offered greater possibilities after all. In 1882, when national agitation ran high in Alsace and Lorraine, Engels sharply condemned that movement. He saw signs of an approaching proletarian revolution in Germany—and to some extent in France as well—and feared that an Alsatian-Lorrainian separatist uprising might set France and Germany against each other in a new chauvinist war which would divide the workers and render revolution impossible. He

⁵¹ Letter to Marx, September 12, 1870. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 4, p. 386.

⁵² Franz Mehring, "Unsere Altmeister und die Instanzenpolitik", *Die Internationale*, I, 1915, pp. 79-80.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

declared that the people of Alsace and Lorraine could well afford to show at least as much patience as the European proletariat, and to wait for a socialist revolution in Germany, which would solve the problem of national minorities along with all other problems.⁵⁴

In 1891, the German-French issue became quite dramatic once more. In France, the feelings of *revanche* had risen to boiling point, and a new war seemed possible and even probable. At this time, France was quite thoroughly conservative and chauvinist, while Germany seemed pregnant with revolution. Therefore the aged Engels decided that Germany had once more become the carrier of progress and must be defended. In September 1891, when Bebel proposed the general arming of the German people for the defense of the fatherland, Engels fully agreed with him. A German war of defense against reactionary French *revanchards* would have a democratic and progressive content. This means that Engels believed that the bourgeoisie of a given nation could under certain conditions continue to play a constructive role even *after* the completion of the national revolution. But while Bebel, in a genuinely socialist spirit, demanded the arming of the people in the form of an independent militia, Engels was more conservative, and insisted that Bebel's proposal should only be carried out "in conjunction with the already existing organization or that specially prepared in case of war."⁵⁵ That Engels was favorable to the German proletariat's defending the nation in case of French attack is quite in accordance with the Marxist dialectical view, but that he actually insisted — contrary to the revolutionary Bebel — that this should be done under the leadership of the bourgeoisie, is strange. It is another sign of the inability of a man formed by the tradition of nineteenth-century liberalism, to understand the phenomenon of the modern bureaucratic state and the difference between a liberal bourgeoisie and a semi-dictatorial ruling caste.

However this may be, Marx would certainly have agreed with both Bebel and Engels in that the potentially revolutionary Germany should be defended against an eventual French attack. And Engels was undoubtedly true to the spirit of his dead friend in the appeal he wrote to the French workers, calling on them to prevent a bourgeois war, and explaining why Germany must not be attacked. This appeal, which was published in the *Almanach du Parti Ouvrier* through the care of Marx's daughter Laura Lafargue, was summed up by Engels in a letter to Bebel. The summary deserves to be quoted fully.

"I say to the people: we have the almost absolute certainty to come to power within ten years; we could neither seize power nor maintain it without making good the crimes committed by our predecessors towards other nationalities... (Poland, Alsace-Lorraine, Schleswig)... Hence there is no reason whatever for a war on account of Alsace-

⁵⁴ Mehring, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁵⁵ Letter to Bebel, September 29, 1891. *Correspondence*, p. 488.

Lorraine. If however, the French bourgeoisie began such a war nevertheless, and for this purpose placed themselves in the service of the Russian tsar, who is also the enemy of the *bourgeoisie* of the whole of Western Europe, this will be the renunciation of France's revolutionary mission. We German socialists, on the other hand, who, if peace is preserved, will come to power in ten years, have the duty of maintaining the position won by us in the van of the workers' movement, not only against the internal but against the external foe. If Russia is victorious, we shall be crushed. Therefore if Russia begins war — go for her! go for the Russians and their allies, *whoever they may be*. Then we have to see to it that the war is conducted by every revolutionary method and that things are made impossible for any government which refuses to adopt such methods; also at a given moment to take the lead ourselves. We have not yet forgotten the glorious example of the French in 1793, and, if we are driven to it, it may come about that we celebrate the centenary of 1793 by showing that the German workers of 1893 are not unworthy of the *Sansculottes* of those days and that if the French soldiers cross our frontiers then they will be greeted with the cry:

*Quoi, ces cohortes étrangères
Feraient la loi dans nos foyers?"*⁵⁶

It is hardly necessary to point out that the "absolute certainty to come to power within ten years" was again based on the inability to foresee the patriarchal state's power to prevent revolutions through a mixture of social reform, propaganda and severity. Also, Engels could not imagine that German Social Democracy itself would become "prussianized" to the point of growing into one of the most law-abiding forces in the German Empire.

3. CENTRALISM AS A NECESSARY PHASE OF DEVELOPMENT.

In the course of his reflections and proposals regarding the struggles of nations and nationalities, Marx repeatedly came into sharp conflict with certain other socialists, and particularly with Proudhon. Proudhon and his followers were products of an advanced industrial society just as much as Marx and Engels were products of a less developed order. While Marx was conscious of the importance of the bourgeois-national revolutions which must precede the socialist transformation of the world, Proudhon tended to regard nations and nationalisms as phenomena of the past, which had no direct bearing on the task of social regeneration. Marx was conscious of the tremendous power of nationalism and irredentism, and knew that these forces must unfold and satisfy themselves, before the peoples of the world could be ready for the establishment of an international brotherhood. Proudhon, on the other hand, saw the solution to national problems in the formula of federalism —

⁵⁶ October 24, 1891. *Correspondence*, pp. 491-492.

federalism of all human groups, regardless of whether these groups had been able to satisfy their inevitable national aspirations or not.

Proudhon was a convinced defender of the right of all nations to be culturally autonomous, but he refused to endorse national movements that took a centralist form. He presented Switzerland as the ideal example of democratic federalism and advocated a Swiss type of organization for the whole world, greatly underestimating the force of centripetal tendencies and of nationalist exaltation in modern society.⁵⁷

Marx clashed with the Proudhonists on the question of national centralism. This clash has sometimes been represented as a conflict between Germany and France. Actually this is not quite correct. Neither the Marxists nor the Proudhonists can be accused of conscious nationalism. Nevertheless it is clear that national backgrounds played a role in their disagreements. To the Frenchman, who lived in a centralized state, the disadvantages of centralism were obvious, while the German, exasperated by the disorder which prevailed in the confederate system, longed for centralized discipline. Marx, in the conflict between Prussia and Austria, favored the former, while Proudhon sympathized with the latter. Proudhon saw in the federal organization of the Austrian empire the beginnings of something noble and progressive.⁵⁸ Marx attacked his opponent's viewpoint by pointing to the French Jacobin example, which Proudhon rejected.⁵⁹ Proudhon's federalism was the expression of an ideal of stateless internationalism. Marx shared that ideal, but was too realistic to conceive of it as an immediate possibility. Before communist decentralization could develop, the middle class and working class would first have to centralize the state to overcome the *ancien régime*. The debate between the two groups was basically a struggle of internationalist intransigence against a dialectical approach which recognized the relative importance of nationalism at a certain stage of historical development.

The representatives of "Young France" (Proudhon) stated, according to Marx, that "all nationalities and even nations were 'antiquated prejudices'".⁶⁰ The Proudhonists felt that the national struggles through which France and other nations had passed need not be repeated in other parts of the world, and that unification was an obstacle rather than an aid in advancing the cause of socialism. They felt that for the whole world an almost simultaneous solution could be found in the universally applied principles of mutualist social reorganization and of decentralization and federalism.

Marx attacked them with biting sarcasm:

⁵⁷ P.J. Proudhon, *Du Principe Fédératif*, pp. 70-83.

⁵⁸ Proudhon felt that the Jacobins, by setting up a centralized government, betrayed the revolution, whose origins had been federalist. Proudhon, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁶⁰ Letter to Engels, June 20, 1866. *Gesamtausgabe* III, 3, pp. 341-342.

"The Proudhon clique among the students in Paris ('Courrier Français') preaches peace, declares war to be antiquated, nationalities to be nonsense, attacks Bismarck and Garibaldi, etc. As polemics against chauvinism their doings are useful and explainable. But as believers in Proudhon (my good friends Lafargue and Longuet⁶¹ also belong to them), who think that the whole of Europe should and would sit peacefully on its ass, until the gentlemen in France have abolished 'la misère et l'ignorance'... they become ridiculous."⁶²

And :

"[The Proudhonists propose] to dissolve everything into small 'groupes' or 'communes', which are to form an 'association', but not a state. And this 'individualization' of mankind with its corresponding 'mutualism' is to proceed while history comes to a stop in all other countries, and the whole world waits until the French are ripe for a social revolution. They will then perform the experiment before our eyes, and the rest of the world, overcome by the force of their example, will do the same. Exactly what Fourier expected of his phalanstère modèle. D'ailleurs anybody who encumbers the 'social' question with the 'superstitions' of the old world is a 'reactionary'.

"The English laughed very much when I began my speech by stating that our friend Lafargue, etc., who has abolished nationalities, had addressed us in 'French'! i.e., in a language which nine tenths of the audience did not understand. I furthermore suggested that by the negation of nationalities he quite unconsciously seemed to imply their absorption into the French model nation."⁶³

Marx concludes that an ideological struggle must be waged on two fronts within the International Workingmen's Association: on the one hand against the right-wing nationalist tendency which saw all problems in the bourgeois perspective of Garibaldi or Mazzini and on the other hand against the extremist cosmopolitanism of the Proudhonists.⁶⁴ Marx considered both extremes to be equally harmful to the cause of international socialism. Narrow nationalism was contrary to proletarian solidarity, while extremist internationalism and negation of the reality of nations was apt to lead to utopian ravings and to a loss of contact with the working masses.

As will be seen later, the conflict between Marxist affirmation and Proudhonist negation of national centralism was but the first of a long series of dissensions between socialist groups and factions about the role of nationalism. Time after time, the socialists of the economically advanced and powerful countries, where all internal national questions had been solved, would have the tendency to focus their attention exclusively on the social issues, while the socialists of the less advanced,

⁶¹ Marx's sons-in-law.

⁶² *Gesamtausgabe*, III, 3, pp. 336-337.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 341-342, and *Correspondence*, pp. 207-208.

⁶⁴ *Correspondence*, pp. 207-208.

not yet nationally integrated, countries would be conscious of the importance and of the revolutionary impact of the struggles of nationalities. Proudhon's view can be defined as purely Western, corresponding to a phase of social struggle between capital and labor, while Marx' stand is Eastern, in the sense of taking the pre-capitalist world into account. Many years later the debate between the two socialist leaders was to be repeated under different forms, between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, between Lenin and Pyatakov, between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, between Stalin and Trotsky.

4. THE OVERSEAS COLONIES.

Before leaving Marx and Engels, it is necessary to see how far they limited their conclusions on the national question to Europe, and to what extent they applied them to non-European and non-white areas as well. It becomes quite clear from an examination of their theoretical writing and their correspondence, that in the domain of the national question their field of observation and action was limited to Europe and North America. They did not conceive of the Asian, African and South American underdeveloped areas as playing a potential revolutionary role in the same sense as the nations of Europe.

While for the Marxists of the twentieth century, nationalism and colonialism have become fused into a single and indissoluble problem, for Marx and Engels they were two distinct phenomena, not directly inter-related. They regarded colonialism as a primarily economic issue. They were convinced that events in the overseas colonies of the capitalist countries could have positive or negative effects on the overall structure and behaviour of capitalism, but they never thought of the colonies as nations which were being more and more closely drawn into world politics, and which could produce world-shaking revolutionary movements. The fusion between the national and the colonial question in Marxist theory was not carried out until the second decade of the twentieth century, when Lenin taught that the Asian and African colonies of his day were destined to play a political role analogous to that of Poland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland and the Balkans at the time of Marx.

Marx regarded the colonial and half-colonial countries of Asia and Africa as territories which for the time being had only a very indirect role to play in the development of world affairs. He was aware of the fact that capitalism, by penetrating and dominating the overseas areas, was shaking these areas out of their longlasting lethargy, and gradually drawing them into the realm of dynamic history. In sharp opposition against certain anti-industrial reformers, he considered colonialism to be a historic necessity, and an objectively progressive process. In 1853, he wrote to Engels that he was carrying on "a hidden warfare" against the "anti-industrial Sismondism" of the *New York Tribune*, to which he was contributing regularly at the time. He wrote an article in which "the destruction of the [Indian] native industry by England is

described as revolutionary".⁶⁵ He explained this statement by saying that "revolutionary" in the objective sense did not mean 'morally desirable', because "for the rest the whole rule of Britain in India was swinish, and is to this day".⁶⁶ But he did not foresee a transformation of the economic development of overseas colonies into a political development.

Engels, in his old age, paid more attention to the colonial question than he had done in previous years. But, like Marx, he never extended his concept of revolutionary bourgeois nationalism to the extra-European countries. The closest he ever came to an appreciation of the revolutionary potentialities of a non-European country, was the following comment regarding the nationalist movement of Arabi Pasha:

"The Egyptian campaign begins very nicely... If Arabi is bright enough to avoid major battles... this can become a very drawn-out affair... However it is probable that the thing will be stopped, not by military action, but by off-stage diplomatic horsetrading."⁶⁷

In September 1882, the German socialist theoretician Karl Kautsky asked Engels about the attitude of the English workers in regard to colonialism. Engel's reply shows that he was not conscious of the importance which colonial revolutions could assume. He was convinced that Europe would undergo her proletarian revolution before any of the colonial countries would fight their way to independence and democracy. After telling Kautsky that in regard to colonialism the English workers think "the same as they think about politics in general: the same as what the bourgeois think",⁶⁸ he adds:

"...In my opinion the colonies proper, i.e., the countries inhabited by a European population, Canada, the Cape, Australia, will all become independent; on the other hand the countries inhabited by a native population, which are simply subjugated, India, Algiers, the Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish possessions, must be taken over for the time being by the proletariat, and led as rapidly as possible towards independence."⁶⁹

Engels admitted that India might eventually emancipate herself through a revolution, but such an event would not have an intrinsic relationship with the European socialist movement. It would be a secondary, unimportant revolution, going on outside the center of history. If India should liberate herself by her own efforts, "this will have to be given full scope", for "the proletariat emancipating itself cannot conduct any colonial wars".⁷⁰ But the idea that the bourgeois-national revolution of the colonies might actually precede the establishment of socialism in Europe never occurred to Engels. The victorious

⁶⁵ Letter to Engels, June 14, 1853. *Gesamtausgabe*, III, 1, p. 486.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Engels to Marx, August 26, 1882. *Gesamtausgabe*, III, 4, pp. 555-556.

⁶⁸ Letter to Kautsky, September 12, 1882; *Correspondence*, pp. 399-400.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

European proletariat would have the task of taking over the administration of the colonies and of leading them to independence as swiftly as possible. If certain colonies like India, Algeria and Egypt should free themselves by their own efforts, "[this] would certainly be the best thing *for us*. We shall have enough to do at home. Once Europe is reorganized, and North America, that will furnish such colossal power and such an example that the semi-civilized countries will follow in their wake of their own accord. Economic needs alone will be responsible for this".⁷¹

To forestall any possible rise of socialist "imperialism" or expansionism among the victorious European and North American proletariat, Engels concludes with the emphatic warning:

*"One thing alone is certain: the victorious proletariat can force no blessings of any kind upon a foreign nation without undermining its own victory by so doing."*⁷² Which of course by no means excludes defensive wars of various kinds."⁷³

Engels's comments on China in 1894 also indicate that he believed the capitalist development of economically backward areas to have only an indirect effect on the whole of world affairs. He wrote that the Sino-Japanese war had killed the old China and made a capitalist development of that country inevitable. Such a development would destroy the old social system, based on small peasant culture. Millions of Chinese would be forced to emigrate to Europe and to America. "But Chinese competition, once it is on a mass scale, will rapidly bring things to a head both for [America] and for us, and so the conquest of China by capitalism will at the same time give an impetus to the overthrow of capitalism in Europe and America."⁷⁴

Engels was far indeed from suspecting that China, instead of merely undermining the capitalist system through a slowly growing process of economic expansion, would transform the world scene through a tremendous socialist revolution.

5. CONCLUSION.

In summing up the attitude of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels toward the national question, one can thus stress the following points:

The two founders of "scientific socialism" attached an immense importance to the struggles carried on by nations desirous of independence and consolidation. They considered national liberation and unification movements as expressions of the bourgeois revolution against feudalism and patriarchy. Evaluating these bourgeois-national phenomena in a relativist and dialectical spirit, they never

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Our italics.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Letter to Sorge, November 10, 1894. *Correspondence*, pp. 118-119.

looked at them as ends in themselves, but merely as a passing historical phase which could—but need not necessarily—further the overall march of mankind toward socialism. A bourgeois-national revolution could further this objective forward march by providing a new basis for capitalist development, out of which proletarian forces would grow. In a more immediate sense, it could make a contribution to the overall cause of the working people by splitting or destroying feudal and reactionary empires, or by serving as a revolutionary stimulus to other parts of the world. On the basis of this relativist evaluation of the “objective role” of national movements, Marx and Engels supported or condemned nations according to the importance of their contribution to the cause of democracy and socialism in the world. They gave support to nations who rose in rebellion against a reactionary power, while opposing those which struck against a progressive and promising power, or which confused a larger and more important issue by striking at the wrong time. Very often the self-same nation was alternately regarded with favor or disfavor by Marx and Engels, according to the changes in the overall world situation. Thus Germany’s struggle for unification received Marx’s approval in 1848 and 1870; it lost this approval as soon as it entered into conflict with the interests of the French working class. Poland was supported each time she rose against the Tsar, but was discouraged from rebelling at a moment when her stirring could have had the effect of endangering the revolutionary movement inside Russia. The South Slavs received an outburst of Marxian indignation in 1848, when they rose at the wrong moment against the wrong enemy, but were encouraged a few years later to liberate themselves from Turkish rule and thus to weaken both Russian and Ottoman despotism. The dispassionate objectivity of Marx in judging each nation only in terms of what it could contribute to the cause of socialism at a given moment, was remarkable.

His personal objectivity did not prevent him from grievously misjudging the significance of certain national movements. He equated national centralization with the democratic rule of the bourgeoisie, and had no premonition of the possibility of centralism giving rise to violently anti-democratic tyrannies.

Marx’s and Engels’ consciousness of the importance of national movements was limited to the European and North American areas. They failed to identify the national with the colonial question, and believed that the socialist revolution in Europe would precede the emancipation of the colonies.

One of the principal Marxian tenets—developed in the case of Ireland—stated that a nation which oppresses others cannot itself be free, because the apparatus of repression, used by the dominating country’s ruling class against the subject nation, is gradually transplanted to the dominant nation itself, and employed for the purpose of keeping the proletariat under the knout of Capital.

In their relativist and dialectical evaluation of the national question, Marx and Engels entered into conflict with Proudhon, who maintained that all national tensions could be solved through the worldwide transformation of society on a mutualist and federalist basis. Proudhon thought in terms of a highly advanced and industrialized society; Marx in those of a world which was still largely pre-capitalist and semi-feudal. Proudhon advocated immediate and exclusive concentration on the social issues, and world federalism; Marx proposed a previous settlement of the national problems, on the basis of centralism. Proudhon was thoroughly Western in outlook; Marx rather "Eastern", by comparison. Proudhon's standpoint—the socialist revolution of the West will solve the national problems of the East—, and Marx' position—the national revolutions of the East must precede and condition the socialist transformation of the West—, were to be merely the first of a long series of disputes between Western-and Eastern-minded socialists.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Our terms "West" and "East" should not be interpreted too narrowly. By "West" we mean the typically Western European and North American industrial and capitalist society; by "East", the predominantly Eastern type of underdeveloped and pre-capitalist area — although this "East" may include countries which are geographically Western.

II

THE NATIONAL AND COLONIAL QUESTIONS IN THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL

The period of the Second International (1889 to 1917) was marked by sharp conflicts between the socialist parties of the modern industrial countries, who wanted to march straight ahead toward the realization of socialism, and, on the other hand, the parties of the more backward countries, which were conscious of the national problem and demanded the application of the bourgeois-radical program of 1848 as a preliminary step to the socialist revolution.¹ This conflict of ideas was analogous to the one which had arisen between Marx and Proudhon in the nineteenth century. The socialists of the most advanced and civilized countries of Western Europe looked at the social issues only, and considered national problems as mere surface manifestations of capitalist power struggles. Among the Western socialist parties, both moderates and revolutionaries shared this basic disregard for the problems of the pre-capitalist world. On the other hand, the Marxists of the less developed lands of Eastern and Central Europe were fully aware of the fact that national demands had to be satisfied before socialism could come about. They had, however, strong disagreements among themselves regarding the best method of solving the national questions.

The fact that the Western socialists, both moderate and extremist, had no inkling of the revolutionary potentialities of oppressed nations, showed itself clearly in their discussions regarding colonialism. The right wing advocated a reformist, the left wing a revolutionary solution to that problem. But both Right and Left basically agreed that colonialism was not directly but only quite indirectly related to the proletarian class struggle. This became evident at the International's Stuttgart Congress in August 1907.

1. THE WESTERN SOCIALISTS AND THE COLONIAL PROBLEM.

The colonial question had been placed on the agenda of the Second International's Stuttgart Congress, because at this time the power struggle of the various European powers was growing more and more intense in Africa and in the East. The Moroccan situation was develop-

¹ Cf. Arthur Rosenberg, *Geschichte des Bolschewismus*, pp. 42-45.

ing into a threat to world peace. In all the colonialist countries, socialists spoke out against the rapacity of their ruling classes and their governments. Especially in France, the mighty voice of Jean Jaurès cast confusion and embarrassment into the ranks of the colonialist policy makers.² But in the International itself, the overall theoretical and practical position in regard to this matter had remained undefined. Should a socialist party take a purely negative attitude toward colonialism, condemning it and agitating for the emancipation of all colonies, or should it assume a more cautious position, fighting only the methods of exploitation employed by the ruling classes, but not colonialism *per se*?

The Congress appointed a colonial commission, in which the moderate and reformist elements were in the majority. This majority drafted a resolution which stated that colonialism, while not absolutely necessary for the development of the world, nevertheless had certain positive aspects. This draft resolution proposed that:

“[The Congress] does not reject on principle and for all time every colonial policy, which under a socialist regime could have a civilizing effect.”³

The brutality of the usual methods of colonial exploitation should be condemned, but not the whole of the policy as such. The task of the socialists should be to improve and reform colonialism, rather than to carry on a futile and purely negative struggle against it.

“To this purpose they are to advocate reforms, to improve the lot of the natives . . . , and they are to educate them for independence by all possible means.

“To this purpose the representatives of the socialist parties should propose to their governments to conclude an international treaty, to create a Colonial Law, which shall protect the rights of the natives and which will be guaranteed by all the signatory states.”⁴

The radical minority of the commission, represented by the Germans Ledebour and Wurm, the Frenchmen Bracke and La Porte, and the Pole Karsky, proposed to delete the passage which proclaimed that the International did not condemn colonialism absolutely and for all time, to delete also the paragraph which demanded an international treaty, and to enclose a passage which stated that

“The Congress is of the opinion that capitalist colonial policy must by its very nature lead to the enslavement, forced labor or extermination of the native population.

“The civilizing mission which capitalist society invokes, only serves this society as a cloak to hide its lust for conquest and exploitation. . .”⁵

² J. Jaurès, *Pour la Paix*.

³ *Internationaler Sozialisten-Kongress zu Stuttgart, 18. bis 24. August 1907*, p. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

The reformist majority standpoint was defended by the Dutchman Van Kol. He accused Ledebour and the other members of the minority of being unrealistic and irresponsible. He argued that capitalism was a necessary phase through which the colonies must pass, and that it would be reactionary to ignore that fact and to abandon the natives to the state of barbarism or savagery from which only colonialism could save them. Reforms could achieve a great deal of good, and in this respect the Dutch party had done its duty, while the German and the French party, through their refusal to accept colonialism, had neglected theirs.⁶

Van Kol was supported by Eduard Bernstein, who urged the socialists to work for a gradual and evolutionary improvement of the colonial natives' lot. He maintained that it would be utopian to demand withdrawal from the colonies. And not only utopian but barbarous and reactionary as well. Withdrawal from the colonies would imply "giving the United States back to the Indians".⁷ The audience greeted these comments with a discordant outburst of boos and cheers. Pulse-beats began to quicken and faces grew redder. Edouard David, supporting Van Kol and Bernstein, defiantly asked Ledebour why the latter did not advocate immediate total withdrawal from all colonies. He was somewhat taken aback when Ledebour replied that this was precisely what he advocated.⁸ But David insisted that colonialism was a historic necessity. "The colonies, too, must pass through capitalism. One does not pass from savagery to socialism by a single leap."⁹ The radical Karsky replied, that Marx had never said that all countries were obliged to pass through a capitalist phase of development. Besides, most of the colonies were far from savage or even barbarous. "We have no reason to make such a fuss about our so-called culture and to force it on Asiatic nations who possess an age-old culture of their own."¹⁰

The most forceful attack on the reformist majority resolution was delivered by Karl Kautsky, who drew on his vast knowledge of Marxian writings to refute Van Kol's thesis. He pointed out that the task of the socialists lay in liberating the toiling masses of the whole world from the chains of capital, in the colonies as well as in Europe. Colonialism was the direct anti-thesis to revolution. It exploits foreign peoples, and makes the very blessings of civilization repulsive to them, by imposing them through brutal force. After the socialist revolution had transformed Europe into a co-operative commonwealth, the backward peoples would be led to civilization, not through colonialist oppression, but through friendly aid from the European workers. The

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

first task of socialists must be that of winning the confidence of the backward and oppressed peoples.¹¹

Feeling himself defeated, Van Kol became quite aggressive. He accused Kautsky of being a utopian theoretician and dreamer. With a rather heavy humor, he described an imaginary scene in which Kautsky arrived in Central Africa to gain the natives' confidence and to bring them a modern machine. According to Van Kol, the natives would first perform a war-dance around the machine, and then proceed to barbecue and eat Kautsky. "Therefore we must go there with weapons in our hands, even if Kautsky chooses to call that imperialism." Only through force would the socialists be able to liberate the natives from the chains of darkness and misery, and to give them practical and effective aid.¹²

Undaunted by Van Kol's prediction of culinary doom, the congress voted against the reformist majority resolution and adopted the radical resolution proposed by Ledebour and his colleagues.¹³

This discussion at the Stuttgart Congress reflected the fact that among the Western socialists both the reformist and the revolutionary wing regarded the colonial question as something distinct from the problem of nationalities or nationalism. The one Marxist who was conscious of the intimate relationship existing between the two matters — V.I. Lenin — was only at the beginning of his career as a revolutionary, and his voice was not heard at the Congress of Stuttgart.

Lenin's theory of the revolutionary role of oppressed nations developed slowly, under the influence of various doctrinal divergencies in the ranks of the Second International, and of concrete events taking place in the world. The first ideological challenge which impelled Lenin to formulate his own theory on this subject came from the right-wing socialists of Austria.

2. LENIN AND THE BOLSHEVIKS AGAINST THE AUSTRO-MARXIST SCHOOL OF THOUGHT.

The Socialist Party of Austria had quite naturally developed as a federation of various national sections, corresponding to the different nationalities within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Since the problem of the relationship between the various nationalities in Austria was one of extraordinary importance, the Austrian Social-Democrats decided to meet for the specific purpose of discussing this problem and of advocating ways to solve it. The congress gathered at Brünn (Brno) on September 24, 1899.

Even though a great deal of national animosity existed between the various nationalities of the Austrian Empire, the national question was

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

not so acute that it appeared to demand a violent and revolutionary solution. Without exception, the delegates to the Brünn Congress agreed on the basic principle that the equality of all nationalities within the empire constituted "primarily a cultural demand".¹⁴ The only point on which disagreement existed, regarded the ways of satisfying this cultural demand. Two ways were possible. One consisted in fighting for *territorial autonomy* of all Austro-Hungarian peoples in cultural and linguistic matters. The other way could lie in seeking to establish national-cultural equality and autonomy on a purely *personal, non-territorial basis*. The former alternative was proposed by the national executive committee of the Austrian Socialist Party. The committee proposed a resolution, in which it was stated that the Austrian Empire should be transformed into a democratic federation of nationalities. The component parts of this federation would be "autonomous national self-administration units", based on the linguistic areas. All culturally autonomous regions of a given language group should be federated. "The self-administration units of each nation together shall form a national entity according to each case; which national entity shall administer its national (i.e., linguistic and cultural) affairs autonomously."¹⁵ In districts of mixed nationality, the linguistic and cultural rights of the minorities would be protected through special laws.¹⁶ Thus the committee's draft resolution proposed: 1) Cultural and linguistic autonomy of each nationality within the empire, on a regional basis; 2) Federation of all districts of a given nationality into a higher national-cultural body; 3) Special laws for the protection of minorities which could not be territorially defined.

The South Slav section of the Party, on the other hand, proposed that national-cultural autonomy should not be tied to any territorial considerations, but that every citizen should be part of a culturally and linguistically autonomous nation, even if he did not inhabit a common territory with his fellow-nationals.¹⁷ By this proposal, the South Slavs intended to forestall any rivalries and hostilities which might arise during an attempt to delimit the various regions, in areas where dozens of different nationalities lived closely together, in small *enclaves*. After some discussion, however, the congress adopted the resolution of the central committee. The central committee's rapporteur, Seliger, stated hopefully that the decentralization of Austria would put an end to all national discord within the empire, just as the national-federal organization of the Socialist Party was eliminating all division between workers of different origins.¹⁸

¹⁴ *Verhandlungen des Gesamtparteitages der Sozialdemokratie in Oesterreich*, p. xiv.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xv.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107. In reality, the relations between the national sections inside Austrian Social-Democracy left much to be desired. Bitter quarrels took place between Czech and German-Austrian workers a few years after the Brünn Congress.

On the basis of the resolution of the Brünn Congress, Otto Bauer, one of the most brilliant theoreticians of the Austrian Socialist Party, undertook a detailed study of the nature of nationality and its relation to socialism. Impressed by the nationalist fervor of the various groups within the Austrian Empire, Bauer came to the conclusion that nations are not mere passing phenomena, but organic units which date back to ancient times, and which will outlast all economic changes, including the change from capitalism to socialism. A nation, for Bauer, is more than a socio-economic unit; it is "a community of character which springs from a community of destiny".¹⁹ Even the things which were common to the workers of all countries, were interpreted by them in different ways, according to their respective, historically constituted "national apperception".²⁰ Most socialists interpreted Marx's words, "the workers have no country", to mean that the proletariat had outgrown the national phase of development, and would build its future on an international basis, with nations gradually disappearing and making room for a single cosmopolitan human society. Bauer interpreted these words differently. The phrase, "the workers have no country" meant to him that the workers do not yet have a country. National culture was the exclusive possession of the feudal aristocracy during the middle ages; it had become the patrimony of the bourgeoisie since the industrial revolution; free public education had begun to enable sections of the proletariat to partake of their cultural nationhood as well, but much needs still to be done.²¹ According to Bauer, the workers do not have a country yet, but they will have one after socialism is established, with education and the enjoyment of culture becoming equally available to all members of the national organism. In the socialist world of the future, the working class of every country would enter into its national heritage. Thus the future world, according to Bauer, would be one in which international brotherhood is conditioned by an intensive flowering of every separate culture. Instead of making men conform to a single international norm, socialism would accentuate national diversification.²²

In order to enable the workers to conquer their national heritage, and also in order to eliminate animosities which threatened the overall solidarity of the proletariat, Bauer, in agreement with the Brünn Congress, proposed a solution of national cultural autonomy for the Habsburg Empire. This solution he believed to be possible even under capitalism. The empire should be transformed into a federal state, with each nationality ruling its territory as far as cultural matters were concerned. But Bauer went farther than the majority at the Brünn Congress. He took up the South Slav proposal, and sought to combine it with the general principle of territorial autonomy. Seeing that some

¹⁹ O. Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie*, p. 113.

²⁰ Bauer, *op. cit.*, pp. xxvii-xviii, 107-108.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-109.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 108. "Heranziehung des gesamten Volkes zur nationalen Kultur-gemeinschaft, Eroberung voller Selbstbestimmung durch die Nation, steigende geistige Differenzierung der Nationen — das bedeutet der Sozialismus."

nationalities did not inhabit a fixed territory, which could be transformed into a self-administration unit, but were spread out irregularly over large areas of the empire, he proposed a solution of *personal* cultural autonomy to supplement the principle of territorial autonomy. That meant that each nationality, whether regionally settled or not, would be represented in a federal legislative and administrative organ, and that every single member of a given nationality, anywhere in the empire, would be entitled to representation and protection by his national delegation. Bauer's thesis was taken up and elaborated in more detail, especially from the legal standpoint, by Karl Renner.²³

Bauer's thesis was attacked by Karl Kautsky, who felt that the solution of personalist cultural autonomy implied a danger to the international solidarity of the working class. Kautsky also disagreed with Bauer's emphasis on the organic and absolute character of the nation, and with his contention that social progress meant increasing diversification. Kautsky pointed out that national differences, far from becoming greater, were on the contrary tending to disappear under the influence of economic and technological development. A socialist, instead of opposing such a trend and deploring it, should on the contrary welcome the gradual disappearance of national differences and the emergence of a uniform world-wide civilization.²⁴

But a much more severe attack was launched against Bauer's reformist national program by the Bolsheviks under the inspiration of Lenin. Lenin, like Bauer, came from a multinational empire. But while in easy-going Austria it seemed possible that national animosities might be overcome even under the rule of capitalism, through a solution of cultural autonomy and decentralization, in Russia the situation was different. Under the knout of Tsarism, no peaceful and reformist solution to the national problem could be envisaged. The Bolsheviks based their program on the complete destruction of Tsarism through a violent revolution. Therefore they refused to look at the national question as something which could be settled by constitutional means. Lenin was conscious of the fact that the nationalist fermentations among the minorities in Russia constituted a very *potent revolutionary force*, which the socialists should try to harness.

The doctrine of national cultural autonomy was particularly offensive to Lenin because it implied the *federalist and decentralized reorganization of the socialist party*. This doctrine had repercussions inside the ranks of the Russian Social-Democrats. In 1906, the Jewish Socialist Bund, which maintained a position of autonomy in regard to the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, proposed that the latter should reorganize itself on a federalist basis, granting a certain autonomy to each of its national sections (Great Russian, Ukrainian, Caucasian, etc.). Lenin violently opposed this. While he was willing to demand much more than the Austrians or the Bund in terms of national self-determin-

²³ Karl Renner, *Das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Nationen*, pp. 40-294.

²⁴ Karl Kautsky, *Die Befreiung der Nationen*.

ation, he felt that national decentralization *should under no circumstances be applied to the proletarian party*. Multi-national empires should be burst asunder, much more radically than Bauer or the Bund demanded, but the proletariat, on the other hand, must preserve the tightest, most centralized international unity. Writing to Maxim Gorky in February 1913, Lenin expressed his abhorrence of reformist federalist solutions, which threatened the unity of the proletarian party organization:

“Regarding nationalism, I share your opinion, that we should concern ourselves more with it. We have a fine Georgian here, who is writing a big article for the *Prosveshchenie*, for which he has collected all the Austrian, and other, data. . . Here and in the Caucasus, the Social Democrats have worked among the Georgians, Armenians, Tatars, Russians, jointly in a *single* Social Democratic organization for more than ten years. That is. . . the proletarian solution of the national question.

“No, we shall *not* have such dirty business as in Austria. We shall never tolerate it! Anyway there are more of our kind here, more Great Russians. We shall not allow the ‘Austrian spirit’ to spread among the workers.”²⁵

The “fine Georgian” Lenin was referring to was Iosif Vissarionovitch Dugashvili, known more generally by the name of Stalin. The lengthy article which Stalin was then writing, probably under the direct guidance and inspiration of Lenin, was an attempt to refute the theory of Otto Bauer and of his followers. The article is remarkably forceful and clear, but, as Richard Pipes has pointed out in his excellent study,²⁶ inaccurate in terms of factual information, especially as far as the Brünn Congress of the Austrian Socialists is concerned. It was published under the ambitious title “Marxism and the National Question”.

Stalin first develops his own theory of the nature of nations, and then proceeds to attack the stand taken by Bauer.

A nation, wrote Stalin, must be distinguished from a tribe. While a tribe is an ethnic unit, a nation is “a historically constituted community of people”, existing quite regardless of ethnic affinity.²⁷

To constitute a nation, according to Stalin, four elements are needed: 1. Community of language; 2. Community of territory; 3. Community of economic life; 4. Community of psychological make-up.²⁸ And he sums up:

“A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up, manifested in a community of culture.”²⁹

²⁵ Lenin, *Briefe an Maxim Gorky*, p. 75.

²⁶ R. Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, p. 40.

²⁷ I.V. Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8. Pipes indicates, very correctly, that the non-materialist notions of “psychological make-up” and “stable community” are more Stalinist than Leninist or even Marxist.

All four of these elements are needed; as soon as one of them is lacking, the group in question ceases to be a nation. Thus the Swiss, for example, do not constitute a nation, in Stalin's mind, but three nations comprised within one state system. Even though all the Swiss nationalities form an economic, territorial and psychological community, their difference of language prevent them from being a single nation. The Jews, whom Bauer and Kautsky considered to be a nation in spite of the Diaspora, are no nation by even a single one of the four requirements, according to Stalin. They are economically disunited, territorially scattered, possess no single common language nor common psychology. Thus they form not one but many small groups, and are frequently absorbed by the larger nations in whose midst they live.³⁰

Stalin accuses Bauer of creating a mystical concept of the nation, by his vague and metaphysical formulation of "community of destiny" and "community of character". Bauer, said Stalin, was confusing "*nation*, which is a historical category, with *tribe*, which is an ethnographical category".³¹

From his definition of the nation, Stalin goes on to place the nation concept in its historical setting. He is certainly closer than Bauer to Marx's materialist thought, when he states that a nation is not a permanent unit, but simply a symptom of a certain phase of historical evolution, namely, the phase of rising capitalism.³²

In Western Europe, writes Stalin, the nations which arose as an expression of the bourgeois struggle against feudalism, became national states. In Eastern Europe, where feudalism was able to withstand the revolutionary stirrings of the lower classes, the nations remained enclosed in multi-national empires. The Eastern multi-national state was thus an expression of the fact that capitalism was not sufficiently developed in this region. As capitalism began to evolve in the East, the struggle of nationalities for their independence came into being. The Eastern petty bourgeoisie and peasantry quite naturally came to employ the nationalist pattern of action against the feudal landlords and the autocracy, just as their Western counterparts had done centuries earlier. The national struggle could either be the expression of the revolt of the petty bourgeoisie and peasantry of an oppressed nation against the ruling bourgeoisie of the dominant country, or the expression of a national bourgeoisie's rebellion against the feudal aristocracy of the ruling country.³³

For the young bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation, Stalin continues, the national struggle is essentially of an economic nature. The rising class fights for the formation of a national market. The struggle becomes political from the moment at which the ruling class of the

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

dominant country begins to resort to political measures in order to repress the economic aspirations of the young national bourgeoisie.³⁴

Stalin takes up the most essential point: What should be the attitude of the revolutionary proletariat toward a nationalist movement which represents essentially the economic interest of an underprivileged section of the bourgeoisie? Stalin points out that the strength of a national movement is determined by the degree to which the proletariat and the peasantry join and support it. In cases in which the nationalism of an oppressed nation is still revolutionary in the social sense, — that is, in cases in which the internal social tensions of the oppressed nation have not yet blossomed into maturity — that nation's proletariat will tend to fight under the banner of its bourgeoisie. On the other hand, if strong social tensions have already developed inside the oppressed nation, the proletariat will fight on the basis of its own independent class program, perhaps in temporary alliance with its bourgeoisie, but not under the latter's leadership.³⁵

It is true from the Marxist viewpoint that the proletariat should always oppose national oppression, Stalin continues. It must do so even though the nationalist movements in themselves have a bourgeois character. National oppression harms the workers' cause because it handicaps the proletarians' cultural development, and especially because it tends to divert the attention of the workers from social to national demands. National oppression enables the ruling class of the dominant country to break up the international solidarity of the proletariat, by inciting the workers of one nationality against those of another. The classical example of such "divide-and-conquer" tactics on the part of the ruling class is the pogrom.³⁶ Nevertheless, Stalin writes, the proletariat and its party should never subscribe to *all* demands of the nationalists of an oppressed country. The revolutionary socialist parties have the duty to advocate a separate political organization of the workers. The workers may partially or even completely support a national movement, as long as they keep up a separate organization and class program, and do not place themselves under bourgeois leadership.³⁷

Then Stalin states an extremely important point, which reproduces one of the principal thoughts of Lenin: the dialectical approach to the national question. The proletariat is to look at the national problem on two levels: the level of democratic national rights, and that of the social interests of the workers themselves. As far as democratic national rights are concerned, revolutionary socialists should recognize the *right* of every subject nationality to self-determination and to secession. But from the standpoint of the proletariat as a class, they may oppose a secessionist movement, if this movement should be harmful to the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

overall interests of the proletarian world revolution.³⁸ This attitude is true to the spirit of Marx, except for the fact that Marx never gave even an abstract recognition to any intrinsic "right" of *all* nations to be independent.

National cultural autonomy, Stalin writes, perpetuates the existing multi-national state, and seeks to gather artificially into one collectivity all sorts of elements which no longer possess any real historic ties.³⁹ And especially this would serve to establish artificial *inter-class* unions, and thus to hinder the progress of the proletarian class struggle. National cultural autonomy would have the effect of making the workers look to their national bourgeoisie for guidance, rather than to their proletarian class brothers. As a gruesome example of such a tendency, Stalin mentioned the case of Austria, where the workers had split into national sections. The Czech and German sections had now come to fight each other and to break each other's strikes. Stalin remarked that this indicates that the principle of national cultural autonomy had not succeeded in bringing greater freedom to the subject nationalities — the Social Democrats not having been able to make the imperial government accept this principle —, but only in splitting the working class movement. Stalin demanded the opposite: a policy which should be able to effectively liberate all nations which wanted to secede, while preserving and reinforcing the indissoluble unity of the workers of all nationalities.

With particular vigor, Joseph Vissarionovitch attacked the leaders of the Jewish Socialist Bund, who demanded that the Russian Socialist Party adopt a Bauerist stand on national cultural autonomy. In the first place, Stalin wrote, the Jews are not a nation, because they are scattered over wide territories, without economic cohesion, and even speak different languages. Furthermore, he argued rather strangely, they are not a nation because they are not tied to the soil; there are no peasants among them.⁴⁰ Thus, he mocked, "autonomy is being proposed for a nation whose future is denied, and whose existence has still to be proved."⁴¹ Under the rule of autocracy, Stalin argued, the demand of the Bund for "institutions which guarantee complete freedom of cultural development" must remain unfulfilled. Only the overthrow of autocracy and the establishment of democracy could succeed in fulfilling such a demand. But since democracy, like in Switzerland, would by its very nature grant equality to all nationalities, by granting equality to all citizens, the Bund's demand would then become superfluous.⁴²

The example of the Bund was followed by certain Caucasian groups.⁴³ Against them, Stalin employed the same type of arguments.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36. This "blood-and-soil" type of argument is rather surprising in the mouth of a Marxist.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41.

⁴³ See R. Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union*, p. 28.

The Caucasian groups refused to fight for the right to secession and demanded limited cultural autonomy only. The opposite would be the correct socialist standpoint. The socialists should fight for the right to territorial self-determination, and at the same time stand for international proletarian solidarity in opposition to a reactionary type of cultural autonomy which meant the perpetuation of archaic customs. Thus independence for the Tatars would be a revolutionary demand which would mean dealing a blow against autocracy. Cultural autonomy, on the other hand, would be profoundly reactionary. It would be a demand which could not harm the autocracy effectively. At the same time it would mean driving even the revolutionary and class-conscious Tatars, who had already transcended narrow national limitations, back under the control of the mullahs and the khans. Stalin darkly hinted that national cultural autonomy would mean nothing but "to 'preserve' such 'national peculiarities' of the Tatars as self-flagellation at the festival of Shakhsei-Vakhsei, or to 'develop' such 'national peculiarities' of the Georgians as the vendetta".⁴⁴ Thus socialists must never put forth the reactionary demand of cultural self-determination, but the revolutionary one of the right to complete territorial self-determination to the point of secession, while at the same time fighting for the international organizational and ideological unity of the toilers.

This is the Bolshevik case against the theory of Bauer. It is based on two basic dialectical concepts:

1) Right to self-determination (territorial) vs. right to autonomy (cultural). The former is revolutionary and anti-imperialist, the latter reactionary and anti-socialist.

2) *Right* to secede vs. *opportunity* to secede. The *right* to secession must be demanded for all nations, without exception. But if the overall interests of the world proletariat demand it, the international party may at the same time agitate among the workers of a given nation *against* secession, and oppose the secessionist movement, not with the tools of autocratic oppression but with those of international proletarian solidarity. At any rate, the step of *separation* from an imperialist ruling power must eventually be followed by *re-union* with that same power, after it has undergone its socialist revolution.

Thus the Bolsheviks proposed that an international revolutionary party should *at the same time* fight, through its section in the ruling country, for the *territorial breakup* of an imperialist order, and, through its section in the oppressed countries, for the *reunification* of the broken-up territories in the name of proletarian brotherhood.

⁴⁴ Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

3. LENIN'S DISAGREEMENT WITH ROSA LUXEMBURG.

Like most of Lenin's important theoretical works, his writings on the application of the Bolshevik national solution to the non-European colonies are polemics directed against socialists holding other views. In the particular instance of the national and colonial question, his main theoretical opponent was Rosa Luxemburg, seconded by extreme-left wingers within the Bolshevik group itself, such as Bukharin, Piatakov and Radek.

Even before applying his conclusions on the national question to the international scene, Lenin had studied the problems of national struggles within Russia, and had laid the groundwork for the ideas that were expressed by Stalin in *Marxism and the National Question*. His earliest important writing on the national question dates from 1903.⁴⁵

A discussion was raging among the socialists of Russia, at that time, about Point Nine of the program of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.⁴⁶

The fact that the program spoke only of *recognition* of the right of nations to self-determination, instead of calling for unconditional *support* of the national liberation movements, reflected the Marxist viewpoint that national struggles must remain subordinate to the socialist proletarian struggle. But the Marxist relativism of his version elicited strong protests from various socialist groups belonging to subject nationalities within the Russian Empire. Thus the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) demanded a stronger wording of Point Nine.⁴⁷

Against them, Lenin insists that "it is to the interests of [the] class struggle that we must *subordinate* the demand for national self-determination".⁴⁸ To support his thesis, Lenin quotes Kautsky — whom at that time he considered to be the master of Marxist orthodoxy — to the effect that Polish independence must be fought for only if it is in the interest of the proletarian world revolution, but not for its own sake. In 1896, Kautsky had written:

"Marx and Engels were most decidedly in favor of the unity and liberation of Italy, but this did not prevent them from pronouncing themselves, in 1859, against an Italy allied with Napoléon III."⁴⁹

At the time of Marx and Engels, Lenin explained, basing himself on Kautsky's article, Poland was extremely revolutionary. But no longer:

"Now the Polish ruling classes... have joined the ruling classes of the countries that oppress Poland — while the German and the

⁴⁵ Lenin, "The National Question in Our Programme", *Selected Works*, II, 322-331.

⁴⁶ "The right of all nations (*natsii*) in the state to self-determination." Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴⁷ Lenin, *op. cit.*, 323.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁴⁹ Kautsky, "Finis Poloniae?", *Die Neue Zeit*, XIV, 2, 520, 1896.

Russian proletariat are fighting for their freedom side by side with the Polish proletariat, which has heroically assimilated the traditions of old revolutionary Poland.”⁵⁰ And Lenin quotes Kautsky to state that the Russian revolutionary movement now offers greater hope to the world proletariat than the Polish revolutionary movement.⁵¹

Thus Lenin’s argument against the nationalist socialists is clear: the value of a national liberation movement can be gauged by its contribution to the world-wide proletarian revolution. If it objectively aids the proletarian world revolution, it should be supported by socialists; if it objectively hinders the world revolution, it should be opposed, regardless of the “general” demand for the right of nations to self-determination. It is implied in Lenin’s presentation of his view that the socialist opposition to an inopportune national movement must not be carried out by demanding the *forcible* retention of the rebellious nation in its old status, but by *agitating* among the proletarians of the oppressed nation against a separatism which is contrary to their interests.

Lenin applied this argument not only against the separatism of the PPS, but also against the Jewish socialists who demanded organizational separation from the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party.⁵²

In his fight against the nationalist deviation, Lenin was supported by extreme-left internationalists within the ranks of the Polish socialists. The main representative of this trend was Rosa Luxemburg.

Rosa Luxemburg, however, went to internationalist extremes which placed her in sharp conflict with the Bolsheviks. She belonged to the Western-minded brand of socialists who saw the future in terms of immediate proletarian revolution. Lenin, on the other hand, placed in a backward society, which resembled the Central Europe of the time when Marx was young, believed in revolution by stages—the national democratic revolution first, and the proletarian revolution afterwards. He did not believe in a simultaneous world-wide socialist uprising. As Arthur Rosenberg so justly remarked:

“The Russia of 1895 bore a surprising resemblance to the Germany of 1845. In both countries the bourgeois revolution was necessary before anything else “...” Lenin, in 1905, presented the slogan of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants, a genuinely Marxist idea, which, however, no Social Democrat of Western Europe, no matter how radical, could have formulated “...” While the Mensheviks... thought in a modern Western European manner, the Bolsheviks thought in the manner of 1848.”⁵³

Rosa Luxemburg shared with the Mensheviks the belief in the purity of the socialist revolution, and in the undesirability of the socialists’

⁵⁰ Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Lenin, “Does the Jewish Proletariat Need an ‘Independent Political Party’?”, February 1903, *Selected Works*, II, 332-337.

⁵³ A. Rosenberg, *Geschichte des Bolschewismus*, 31-44.

occupying themselves with bourgeois-democratic affairs such as the national problem. She differed from the Mensheviks in that, like the Bolsheviks, she believed in violent revolutionary action. Trotsky, who before 1917 was a left-wing independent within the Russian socialist movement, held views very similar to those of Rosa Luxemburg. For both Luxemburg and Trotsky, the only possible kind of revolution was the socialist world revolution, developing mainly within the advanced capitalist countries. In her famous book, *The Accumulation of Capital*, Rosa Luxemburg stated that world capitalism has been transformed into international imperialism, and that this international imperialism will collapse through its own contradictions as soon as it will have devoured the last available bit of colonial territory. Its downfall would come, as a result of its own international nature, on a world-wide scale. Rosa Luxemburg was convinced that imperialism had permeated every corner of the world to such an extreme degree, that no national struggle was possible any more, that all "national" struggles were actually the expression of power struggles within the imperialist camp, and that even the most democratic-seeming national revolution would inevitably be used by a group of rapacious imperialists for its own ends. In regard to Poland, especially, Rosa Luxemburg pointed out the evil effect which nationalism has on the workers, inasmuch as it makes them follow the leadership of their national bourgeoisie, and lose sight, at the same time, of the general class interests which bind them to the workers of other nationalities. Unlike the Bolsheviks, she believed that even in Russia the national problem could not be solved through secessionist movements, but only through an immediate proletarian revolution in the industrial centers.⁵⁴

At the beginning of 1914, one year after Stalin's attack on Bauer and the right wing had been published, Lenin wrote his treatise "On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination", in which he subjected Rosa Luxemburg's ultra-internationalist views to a severe criticism. More than ever, under the influence of the Balkan crisis, the national antagonisms in Russia were becoming acute and dangerous, and more than ever Lenin understood that the national question could not be evaded. Having fought against Bauer's reformism in the national question, he now turned against Luxemburg's position, which in its denial of the importance of nationalism seemed like a twentieth-century version of Proudhonism.

Lenin agrees with Rosa Luxemburg in that it is impossible for a small nation to conquer complete independence under the reign of imperialism, but he insists on the fact that a genuine national liberation struggle is nevertheless possible, not only in the colonial countries of Asia but even in Europe. "Rosa Luxemburg has substituted the question of the economic independence of states for the question of the political

⁵⁴ R. Luxemburg, "Das Problem der hundert Völker", *Die Neue Zeit*, 1904-1905, No. 20, pp. 643-646.

self-determination of nations in bourgeois society, and of their independence as states.”⁵⁵ Even though complete independence, including the economic domain, is difficult, or even impossible, to achieve for a small nation, it can at least undertake some steps in the direction of real independence, and these steps involve above all the achievement of statehood. In this argument, Lenin bases himself on Kautsky, who had polemized against Luxemburg’s ideas in the pages of the *Neue Zeit*.⁵⁶ Kautsky had pointed out in his article that the national state is the typical social framework for capitalist development.

Lenin accuses Rosa Luxemburg of presenting the national question in an absolute, undialectical light, instead of remembering that in different historical periods the same event may have very different meanings. To Rosa Luxemburg’s assertion that if the principle of self-determination can be applied to Russia, it could also be applied to Switzerland, Germany or other advanced countries, Lenin replies with a severe rebuke.

“Obviously, we reply, Rosa Luxemburg decided to make her article a collection of errors in logic, suitable for school-boy studies. For Rosa Luxemburg’s tirade is absolute nonsense and a mockery of the historically concrete presentation of the question.”⁵⁷

Before comparing two countries, one must, as a Marxist, analyse their concrete social nature, to find out whether a comparison is possible. Between Russia and Western Europe no comparison is possible, because Western Europe entered its period of bourgeois democratic revolution in the eighteenth century, while Russia is semi-feudal and only began her middle class revolution in 1905.⁵⁸ Russia, according to Lenin, could not even be compared to Austria. Austria had passed through a phase of bourgeois-democratic development already, while Russia had not. The nationalities of the Austrian Empire tend to hang together, because they feel threatened by the prospect of Tsarist oppression, which would be worse than the relatively mild rule of the Habsburgs.⁵⁹ And furthermore, Lenin continues, Rosa Luxemburg is wrong in stating that the Austrian social-democrats oppose national self-determination. Lenin places himself in contradiction with Stalin at this point, correcting the latter’s oversimplifications in regard to the Austrians. The Brunn programme, Lenin points out, gives the national sections of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party the right to demand national self-determination.⁶⁰ Therefore Rosa Luxemburg’s argument is wrong even where she bases herself on the example of the Austrians.

⁵⁵ Lenin, “On the Right of Nations to Self-Determination”, *Selected Works*, IV, p. 253.

⁵⁶ K. Kautsky, “Nationalitaet und Internationalitaet”, *Die Neue Zeit*, Ergänzungsheft No. 1, 1907-08.

⁵⁷ Lenin, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-259.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 260-262.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 262-263.

Lenin insists on the subordination of national self-determination to the class struggle, while Rosa Luxemburg seeks to eliminate the question of self-determination as being incompatible with socialism. The proletariat must support national self-determination as one among many other democratic demands, which serve to create better conditions for the class struggle, Lenin declares. But he qualifies his statement by declaring that the proletariat should only *recognize* the right to self-determination, without *guaranteeing* it to any nation, for the struggle of a nation might conceivably hurt the vital interests of another nation or of the international working class.⁶¹ On the other hand, it is a revolutionary's duty to support the struggle of a small nation, which is being oppressed by a large reactionary power. Failure to support even the bourgeoisie of a small oppressed people against the more dangerous ruling class of a large rapacious country would be equivalent to giving the ruling power a free hand in its imperialistic activities. Rosa Luxemburg's proletarian internationalist purism, by leading her to fight Polish nationalism, is objectively tantamount to appeasement of Great Russian imperialism. "In her anxiety not to 'assist' the nationalistic bourgeoisie of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg by her denial of the *right* to secession in the programme of the *Russian Marxists* is *in fact* assisting the Great Russian Black Hundreds; she is, in fact, assisting opportunist reconciliation with the privileges (and worse than privileges) of the Great Russians."⁶² Rosa Luxemburg, according to Lenin, is forgetting that Polish nationalism, no matter how bourgeois, is at least a weapon against Russian autocracy. Lenin even states that the bourgeois nationalism of *every* oppressed nation "has a general democratic content which is directed *against* oppression and it is this content which we *absolutely* support," while refusing to support any form of nationalism which implies the oppression of another people.⁶³

"Can a nation be free if it oppresses other nations? No, it cannot. The interests of the freedom of the Great Russian population demand a struggle against such oppression. The long, age-long history of the suppression of the movements of the oppressed nations, the systematic propaganda in favor of such suppression on the part of the 'upper' classes, created enormous obstacles to the cause of freedom of the Great Russian people itself, in the form of prejudices, etc."⁶⁴

All proletarians therefore have the duty to agitate for the "equal right of all nations to their national state".⁶⁵ "Such propaganda ensures the most peaceful (and for the proletarian class struggle, harmless) division into the various national states..."⁶⁶

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁶² Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 266 Lenin's italics.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 266-267.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 268-269.

To support his views against those of Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin quotes a resolution of the 1896 London Congress of the Second International. The Congress had declared that it "upholds the full right of self-determination of all nations...", while calling on the workers of all nations to unite in a common front against capitalism.⁶⁷ Lenin also calls Karl Marx to his aid, and quotes the latter's writings on Poland and Ireland, to prove that the founder of scientific socialism was fully conscious of the importance of the national struggle in the framework of the general democratic revolution.⁶⁸

It is precisely the struggle against national oppression, and for free secession, which eliminates the barriers of national antagonism between the workers of different countries and makes their close and fraternal cooperation possible. The struggle for the right of secession of oppressed nations, then, is identical with the fight for international proletarian solidarity, in Lenin's mind. "Only extremely shallow people... can see any 'contradiction' in this."⁶⁹

And Lenin concludes:

"The refusal to advocate the right of self-determination is equal to the worst opportunism, the contamination of the proletariat with the ideas of the Kokoshkins [Kadets]."⁷⁰

And:

"Complete equality of rights for all nations; the right of nations to self-determination; the amalgamation of the workers of all nations — this is the national programme that Marxism, the experience of the whole world, and the experience of Russia, teaches the workers."⁷¹

This argumentation involves a contradiction with the reasoning which Lenin used against the Polish nationalist socialists. In his polemic against the latter, Lenin maintained that Poland had no essential service to render the world proletariat, since Russia herself was pregnant with revolution. He defined Polish nationalism as inopportune and disturbing.⁷² Against Rosa Luxemburg, who used exactly the same argument against him, Lenin resorted to a pro-nationalist line of reasoning, insisting on the need for a Polish secessionist movement to weaken Tsarism. While on the one hand he faithfully follows the Marxian line, in telling the Poles that they must subordinate their national interests to the cause of international revolution, on the other hand he explains to Rosa Luxemburg that the struggle for the right to self-determination of any small nation is a revolutionary duty. Lenin seeks to solve the contradiction by drawing a subtle distinction between "*absolute*" right of secession and relative support of secessionist movements. This

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁶⁸ Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 271-274.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 273.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 293.

⁷² See above, p. 41.

distinction becomes sheer sophistry if the recognition of the "right" is not accompanied by effective action for its implementation. In this, as in other domains, Lenin was above all a practical politician who tried to enable his party to march on two different roads — to be able either to support or oppose a nationalist movement, and, even when opposing it, to claim credit for the platonic recognition of the "absolute right" of secession.

Rosa Luxemburg was not convinced by Lenin's arguments, and in 1916, in her famous *Junius Brochure*, she repeated her assertion that imperialism has made all national liberation movements illusory. She polemizes against the world war, and against the support given by the right-wing social-democrats to their governments. She demonstrated that the German social-democrats' claim that Germany was fighting a revolutionary war against Russia, was quite wrong, since Germany had changed profoundly since Marx' time, and had become a major imperialist power in her own right. In this, Lenin agreed completely with Rosa Luxemburg.

"It is true: Socialism grants every nation the right to independence and freedom, to self-determination of its own destiny. But it is a mockery of socialism, if someone tries to represent the modern capitalist states as the expression of the right of nations to self-determination." ⁷³

But Lenin ceased to agree with her, when she went on to write:

"In today's imperialist world no wars of national defense are possible anymore." ⁷⁴

According to Rosa Luxemburg, the only European state, which might conceivably have the right of national defense on its side, would be Serbia. But the Serbian social-democrats were right in refusing to support the war, for: "Behind Serbian nationalism stands Russian imperialism... Serbia in only a pawn in the great chess game of history." ⁷⁵ "In this manner it is again and again the historical scene of modern imperialism which determines the character of war in the various countries, and this scene makes it so that *nowadays national wars of defense are no longer possible*." ⁷⁶

It is a waste of time, Rosa Luxemburg states, to make partial demands, such as national self-determination. These demands cannot possibly be fulfilled under imperialism, and socialists therefore ought to devote every bit of their energy to the cause of world-wide social revolution. ⁷⁷

Imperialism has unified all continents into parts of a single, tightly-knit world economy, in which conquest, pillage and slaughter have become a part of the productive process. Imperialism cannot be

⁷³ R. Luxemburg (Junius), *Die Krise der Sozialdemokratie*, p. 69.

⁷⁴ Rosa Luxemburg, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 88-89.

destroyed piecemeal, but only as a whole, by the socialist world revolution.⁷⁸

Just as strongly as Lenin believed in the possibility of achieving partial democratic reforms within the framework of an imperialist world economy, Rosa Luxemburg denies this possibility.

She then went on to trace the probable route which the world revolution would take. In her examination of that problem, she took the completely Western viewpoint, which contrasted sharply with Lenin's consciousness of the awakening of Asia. Once more, one is compelled to think of the analogy between Rosa Luxemburg and Proudhon, opposing their Western, purely social brand of revolution to Marx and Lenin's Eastern, social and *national* brand. Rosa Luxemburg writes:

"Only from Europe, only from the oldest capitalist countries, can the signal for the world-liberating social revolution come... Only the English, French, Belgian, German, Russian, Italian workers jointly can lead the army of the exploited and enslaved of the five continents. Only they will be able, when the time will have come, to redress the wrong perpetrated by capitalism through its century-old crimes against all primitive peoples and its work of destruction all around the earth."⁷⁹

Before writing the Junius-Brochure, Rosa Luxemburg and her German Spartacist group had submitted a memorandum to the International Socialist (Zimmerwaldist) Conference at Berne, in February 1916. This memorandum stated that "in an era of unchained imperialism, national wars are no longer possible".⁸⁰ Lenin's influence emerged victorious, however, at the Kienthal Conference, which took place in May, 1916. Point 12 of the resolution of the Kienthal Conference stated explicitly:

"So long as socialism has not achieved the freedom and equality of rights of all nations, the proletariat's unfailing duty is to take part in the class struggle *against all national oppression*, to oppose any violation of weaker nations, to promote the *protection of national minorities* and the autonomy of the peoples on the basis of real democracy."⁸¹

The opposition between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg is thus clear. Like Proudhon at the time of Marx, Rosa Luxemburg considered the question of national liberation to have lost its significance, as the result of a world-wide social process which was placing the social revolution on the agenda of history. Lenin, in a very orthodox Marxist manner, keeping his eyes on the nationalist stirrings in the East, realized that the world-wide social revolution led by the Western workers was not imminent, and that the bourgeois-democratic revolution of the East was a factor of extremely great importance. In terms of Professor Rosen-

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁷⁹ Junius, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

⁸⁰ O.H. Gankin and H.H. Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War*, pp. 394-398.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 423. Italics in the original.

berg's distinction between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks,⁸² Rosa Luxemburg followed the Menshevik trend of thought, with its twentieth-century-Western tendency, while Lenin was the defender of the nineteenth-century—"Eastern" radicalism of Karl Marx.

Rosa Luxemburg was certainly no Menshevik in other domains. She was an ultra-revolutionary fighter, and her Junius-Brochure was written in prison, where she was serving a term for revolutionary anti-war agitation. To show his solidarity with Rosa Luxemburg, and also because her arguments had already been countered by him in "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination", Lenin did not write a criticism of the passages on the national question in the Junius-Brochure.

On the other hand, he turned furiously against those who, among his own Bolshevik followers, began to echo Rosa Luxemburg's words, and to declare that the national problem had lost all significance in the period of imperialist world war. It seemed extremely important to him to keep the Bolshevik line clear of all Luxemburgist deviations, for the support of Russia's subject nationalities in case of revolution depended on the party's taking an unequivocal stand for self-determination and for the right of secession.

4. LENIN VS. THE LEFT BOLSHEVIKS. IDENTIFICATION OF THE NATIONAL WITH THE COLONIAL QUESTION.

During the years spent by the Bolshevik leaders in exile in Switzerland, sharp ideological struggles took place within the group. A number of the most brilliant Marxist theoreticians among the Bolsheviks, especially Bukharin, Piatakov and Radek, agreed with Rosa Luxemburg's viewpoint, and considered Lenin's affirmation of the importance of national struggles to be in contradiction with his theory of imperialism. But Lenin found an economic basis for his theory on national movements in the pages of a book written precisely by his opponent, Bukharin.⁸³ In this book, Bukharin attacked a Kautskyist theory, according to which imperialism might succeed, after the war, in setting up a single world-embracing monopoly, which would eliminate all competition and all national conflicts, and would form the basis for an eventual single, world-wide socialist upsurge. Bukharin proved, on the basis of statistics, that vertical concentration of capital, i.e. concentration within each country, was indeed progressing, but that in the "horizontal", i.e. international, domain, competition was becoming more and more intensive as a result of growing protectionism and dumping. Lenin interpreted Bukharin's conclusions to support his own theory that national liberation movements were still possible.

On November 19, 1915, Bukharin, Piatakov and Anovna Bosch submitted a set of theses to the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party.

⁸² Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-45.

⁸³ N.I. Bukharin, *Imperialismus und Weltwirtschaft*. Wien, Berlin, 1915.

These theses stated that, since finance capital cannot give up imperialist policies without endangering its own existence, "it would be extremely utopian to advance anti-imperialist demands in the realm of foreign policy while preserving *capitalist* relations. The answer to the bourgeois imperialist policy must consist in a socialist revolution of the proletariat; Social-Democracy must not advance 'minimum' demands in the realm of present-day foreign policy.

"It is therefore impossible to struggle against the enslavement of nations otherwise than by struggling against imperialism, ergo ... by struggling against finance capital, ergo against capitalism in general." ⁸⁴ Any struggle for the liberation of nations as a partial demand, would, according to Bukharin and Piatakov, divert the attention of the proletariat from its class interests, and thereby weaken the forces of social revolution.

According to Bukharin and Piatakov there are two cases to which the slogan of self-determination might be applied: 1) Annexation of a piece of foreign territory in war; and 2) Disintegration of a previously existing state. In the first case, the slogan of self-determination would mean "defense of the fatherland" and would therefore be counter-revolutionary and imperialistic. In the second case, the slogan of self-determination would switch the proletariat's attention from its class interests to bourgeois interests, and would break up its revolutionary unity. ⁸⁵

Bukharin and Piatakov do, however, admit the possibility, and the positive nature, of national movements in the backward, colonial countries. In the case of the colonies, they grant that "we can support the uprising of the popular masses as an event which weakens the dominant classes on the continent and which does not split the proletarian forces, since in this case: a) it is not a question of socialism; b) it is a question of the mobilization not of the international forces of the proletariat, but of the forces of the national bourgeoisie which is objectively helping the continental proletariat." ⁸⁶

Karl Radek, writing under the pen-name of Parabellum, advanced the same theory. Lenin rebuked him sharply in November 1916, and pointed out that the proletarian revolution would be impossible without a determined struggle for democratic reforms. National self-determination is one among many democratic demands which can be made and fulfilled even under imperialism, though only in an imperfect manner. "Some of these reforms will be started before the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, others *in the process* of this overthrow, and still others after it. The social revolution is not a single battle..." ⁸⁷

Lenin was strongly in favor of large state units; he envisaged the socialist world of the future in terms of the union and concentration of

⁸⁴ Gankin and Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁸⁷ Lenin, *Selected Works*, V, p. 283. Lenin's italics.

states, but he insisted on the fact that such unions of states must be built on the basis of democracy, i.e., of free consent. In order to make new unions, based on democracy, possible, it would be necessary first to destroy the old unions based on despotism and on national oppression. The closer unity and the fusion of states is "*inconceivable* without the freedom of secession".⁸⁸

Against Piatakov, Lenin used the same arguments, and also pointed out that "the defense of the fatherland is a lie in the imperialist war, but not at all a lie in a democratic and a revolutionary war".⁸⁹

Radek fought back and wrote a series of theses, which were published in the Swiss socialist newspaper *Der Vorbote*, in April 1916. His theses can be resumed as follows: 1) National oppression is on the increase. 2) National oppression contradicts the interests of the working class. 3) The Social-Democratic Party must therefore fight "*against imperialism's policy of annexation*, as well as against the *policy of national oppression* that follows it".⁹⁰ 4) "*Social-Democracy does not advocate either an erection of new boundary posts in Europe or the re-erection of those which have been torn down by imperialism...*"⁹¹ Whenever the crushing wheel of imperialism passed on an already existing capitalist state, there through the brutal means of imperialist oppression a political and economic concentration of the capitalist world takes place which prepares for socialism..."⁹²

Social-democrats should rejoice, Radek declares, at the disappearance of state boundaries, even if these state boundaries are removed by imperialist annexation or conquest. Instead of mourning over the conquest or annexation of weak states in Europe, socialists should see in every encroachment upon the principle of national sovereignty a step forward in the direction of an international community, which would be the perfect basis for the universal socialist revolution. This however — Radek agrees fully with Piatakov and Rosa Luxemburg — applies to Europe only. In the backward colonial countries, revolts led by the young national bourgeoisie should be encouraged and supported. For Europe, Radek proposes the slogan: Away with boundaries!, while for Asia and Africa the slogan should be: Away with the colonies!⁹³ The struggle of the bourgeoisie of the colonies will have a useful effect, inasmuch as it will help to destroy imperialism, but the slogan of national self-determination is basically unsound, even for the colonies. For "the right of self-determination is impracticable in capitalist society".⁹⁴

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 289. Lenin's italics.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 223-225.

⁹⁰ Radek's italics.

⁹¹ Radek's italics.

⁹² Gankin and Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 507-514.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 511.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

While the right of self-determination is impracticable in capitalist society, Radek continues, it is not applicable to a socialist society either. In a capitalist society, the oppression of nations is inevitable; it is a part of the system itself, while in a socialist society the slogan of self-determination will *no longer be necessary*. For "we know that socialism will abolish all national oppression, because it abolishes all class interests which drive towards this oppression". Furthermore it is unlikely that in a socialist society a nation will have the character of an economic-political unit. "In all probability it would possess only the character of a cultural and linguistic unit." Socialist economy would be established on a world-wide instead of a national basis, and therefore "the assigning of the formula of the 'right of self-determination' to socialism is due to a complete misunderstanding of the character of a socialist community."⁹⁵

Moreover Radek attacks the slogan of self-determination from the tactical viewpoint. This slogan, according to Radek, arouses false hopes among the proletarians, makes them turn their eyes to the national scene and distracts their attention from the social battleground.⁹⁶

The defenders of the right of national self-determination have no right, Radek declares, to base themselves on Marx, for while Marx favored the independence of Ireland and Poland, he was hostile to the national movements of the Czechs and South Slavs.⁹⁷

Lenin's point of view against Radek, Bukharin and Piatakov was expressed very clearly in a set of theses published in the *Vorbote* in April 1916. In these theses, he restates his general point of view.

Democracy, Lenin begins, is a form of transition through which the world must pass on the road toward socialism. The proletariat must fight for democracy; national self-determination is a democratic demand; therefore the workers must fight for national self-determination. "The socialist revolution is not a battle on a single front."⁹⁸ The struggle for democracy cannot sway the proletariat from the struggle for socialism, for the interests of democracy and socialism are inextricably woven together. Even under capitalism, national demands can be successfully met, exactly like other democratic demands. Norway had succeeded in winning her independence from Sweden; and Ireland, Poland or India might win their independence, while imperialism continued unshaken in its foundations. Obviously, under imperialism, the democratic demands can only be met partially and incompletely, but that should be no reason for ceasing to fight for them. In fact, socialists have the duty of struggling for all democratic rights even if only a few of them can be fully conquered.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 512.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 514.

⁹⁸ Lenin, *Selected Works*, p. 267-268.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 268-269.

The right of self-determination means the *right* of secession, Lenin specified, but it does not mean an *obligation* to secede. Where national oppression is relatively moderate and mild, the subject nationalities will not even desire secession, but may be satisfied with federation, which in its turn can be the prelude for a new union based on democracy and equality.¹⁰⁰

The proletariat has a two-fold task in the struggle for national self-determination. The proletariat of the oppressing countries must fight with all its energy for the liberation of the nationalities oppressed by its own state. On the other hand, the socialists of the oppressed nation must fight for the "complete, absolute unity (also organizational) between the workers of the oppressed nation and the workers of the oppressing nation."¹⁰¹

This dual action of the proletariat is the essence of the Leninist theory on national self-determination. In a truly dialectical spirit, Lenin sees the revolutionary forces struggling for dissociation on the one hand, and for union on the other. While one branch of the international Party—the party section of the oppressing country—fights for the right to secession of the subject nationalities, the other branch—the section of the oppressed country—fights for the unity of the workers of both nations. The dissociation of the imperialist bonds, of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed, thus becomes the condition for the simultaneous and subsequent tightening of the revolutionary bonds, of the relationship between fellow workers of different nations. Split nations apart in order to break the imperialist chains, and then draw them together again on the new basis of proletarian solidarity: that is the essence of Lenin's theory of self-determination.

Lenin recognized three different types of countries in relation to national self-determination: First, the fully developed capitalist countries of Western Europe and North America. In these countries, the proletariat should fight for the right of secession of their own state's colonies and dependencies. Secondly: the countries of Eastern Europe, in which the full development of capitalism has not yet been completed. In these Eastern multi-national states, the dual struggle for the right of secession on the one hand, and for working-class solidarity on the other, must be carried on simultaneously. Thirdly, the colonial and semi-colonial countries, including China, Persia, Turkey, India, Egypt, etc., in which autonomous capitalist development (the "bourgeois-democratic movement") has scarcely begun. There the socialists must support the national bourgeoisie in its struggle for an independent place under the sun.¹⁰²

While it is correct on the part of the socialists of certain oppressed nations, such as the Poles, to fight the chauvinist attitude of their own

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 270-271.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 275-276.

national bourgeoisie, it is incorrect to transplant this viewpoint to the whole international scene and to generalize it. The task of socialists of an oppressed nation, to fight for international proletarian solidarity against its own nationalistic ruling class, is only one half of the two-fold tactics of the international party. The other half is the struggle for the subject nations' right to secession, on the part of the socialists of the dominant nation.¹⁰³

Lenin attacked Piatakov's arguments by proving that, while Piatakov refused to recognize the right of self-determination theoretically, he was in practice participating in the fight against annexations, and thus recognizing the correctness of the struggle for self-determination implicitly. If self-determination were impossible, why should Piatakov urge the proletariat to fight an "impossible" battle "against the suppression of national uprisings"?¹⁰⁴

Above all, Lenin insisted, Piatakov is wrong in supposing that the socialist revolution could be accomplished by the simultaneous uprising of the workers of all nations. Capitalism is unevenly developed, and "the advanced countries of Western Europe and of North America *alone* are ripe for socialism".¹⁰⁵ But while the workers of these regions might be ready for the socialist revolution, "in the *under-developed* countries... the situation is entirely different... Objectively, these nations still have national tasks to fulfill, namely, *democratic* tasks, the tasks of *throwing off foreign oppression*".¹⁰⁶

And, summing up the discussion, Lenin wrote in October 1916:

"The views of the opponents of self-determination lead to the conclusion that the vitality of small nations oppressed by imperialism has already been sapped, that they cannot play any role against imperialism, that support of their purely national stirrings will lead to nothing, etc. The imperialist war of 1914-1916 has provided *facts* which refute such conclusions."¹⁰⁷

The facts Lenin had in mind were: a mutiny of Indian troops in Singapore, attempts at rebellion in French Indochina and in the German Cameroons, and especially the Irish rebellion. Lenin was convinced that the Irish rebellion represented a significant contribution to the total revolution against imperialism. The fact that the Irish rebellion was not a social, proletarian uprising did not matter. For, "to imagine that social revolution is *conceivable* without revolts by small nations in the colonies and in Europe, without the revolutionary outbursts of a section of the petty bourgeoisie *with all its prejudices*..., to imagine that means *repudiating social revolution*. Only those who imagine that in one place an army will line up and say, 'we are for socialism', and

¹⁰³ Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 280.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 295. Lenin's italics.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

in another place another army will say, 'we are for imperialism', and that this will be the social revolution, only those who hold such a ridiculously pedantic opinion, could vilify the Irish rebellion by calling it a 'putsch'.

"Whoever expects a 'pure' social revolution will *never* live to see it. Such a person pays lip service to revolution without understanding what revolution is."¹⁰⁸

If anti-imperialist revolution is an irregular process, in which certain sections of the population fight under national rather than social slogans, every national liberation movement is extremely important, whether in Europe, or in Asia. At this period Lenin was convinced that Europe was the main revolutionary center, and that the Irish rebellion was the most important of all the national uprisings. It is wrong, he writes, to contrast Europe with Asia, as the Radek-Piatakoff group is doing. National revolutions can take place both in Asia and in Europe, and in all other parts of the world. And if they take place in Europe they are even more important than if they occur in the overseas colonies. "A blow delivered against the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal weight delivered in Asia or in Africa."¹⁰⁹

Such a blow is effective because "the dialectics of history is such that small nations, powerless as an *independent* factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the *real* power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the socialist proletariat".¹¹⁰

And at the All-Russian Conference of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, in April 1917, Lenin fought a vehement battle against the socialists of the Piatakoff variety. With the greatest clearness, he stated once more that:

1. The Polish Left Socialists were right in fighting the secessionist chauvinism of the Polish working classes.

2. The Polish Left Socialists were wrong in wanting their anti-secessionist tactics (which were correct in their own concrete situation only) to be adopted by the Russian socialists as well.

3. If the Russian socialists took the same stand as the Polish socialists, i.e., agitating against Polish secession, they would be guilty of chauvinism.

4. The Poles (members of an oppressed nation) must agitate for union with the Russian workers, while the Russians (members of an oppressing nation) must agitate for Poland's right to secede.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

¹¹¹ Lenin, *op. cit.*, p. 307-308.

"The right to unite implies the right to secede. We Russians must emphasize the right to secede, while the Poles must emphasize the right to unite." ¹¹²

5. SUMMARY: MARX TO LENIN.

If we attempt to retrace and summarize the trends which lead from Marx to Lenin in the evaluation of the national question, the following principal factors appear essential:

Marx developed his doctrine of social revolution at a time when only England and France were fully developed in a capitalist sense, and when in Central Europe no fully independent working class had yet been formed. As a Central European, Marx was fully aware of the strength and significance of nationalism. He realized that the settlement of national disputes and the establishment of independent nations was the condition for the democratic development of Europe, and that this development, in its turn, was the condition for the growth of an independent and socially revolutionary working class. Completely relativistic in his evaluation of nations, considering them only as temporary means for the advancement of democracy, (which in its turn would be a temporary means for the advancement of socialism), Marx favored and supported the struggles of all nations which seemed to him objective carriers of progress (Poland, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, France between Sedan and the fall of the Commune). He opposed the national movements of those nations which he considered to be carriers of objective reaction (the Czechs, the South Slavs). He never declared that nations have an intrinsic or absolute right to be free; but only granted that right to those who might pave the way for the future socialist revolution.

Marx and Engels came into conflict with Proudhon and his disciples, in as far as the national question was concerned. A product of the advanced West, of France, which was the organic modern national state *par excellence*, Proudhon was unable to comprehend Marx's concern for the national problems of Central and Eastern Europe. Proudhon turned his back on nationalism as being a reactionary and distressingly irrational phenomenon, and concentrated his effort on the social question in the advanced West. The struggle between Marx's "Eastern" and Proudhon's "Western" tendency was significant for the whole later ideological history of socialism.

Marx and Engels did not include the non-European colonies in the same category as the oppressed nationalities of Europe. For them, the national and the colonial problems were in no way identical. The national question they looked at as a matter concerning European political democracy, while they saw the significance of the non-European colonies only in purely economic terms.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 308.

Among the followers of Marx and Engels, different tendencies emerged, as far as the national and colonial problems are concerned: a) The Western orthodox Marxists, defending the rights of subject nationalities and demanding the liberation of the colonies as a matter of pure principle, but concentrating their main attention on the social struggle; b) The Western reformist and revisionist socialists, who, believing that the whole world must pass through a capitalist phase, considered colonialism to be a progressive factor, and advocated democratic reforms to humanize the methods of colonialism; c) The Austrian Marxists, acutely aware of the problems of nationalism, desirous to solve these problems within the framework of the Austro-Hungarian Empire through a program of national-cultural autonomy; d) The Bolsheviks, bred in an atmosphere of most intense social and national oppression, conscious of the explosive impact of rebellious nationalism, and of the possibility of linking national and social revolutions together.

The Western orthodox Marxists fought the Western reformists and revisionists over the colonial question. The reformists advocated a "socialist colonial policy", since they considered colonialism to be an inevitable phenomenon on the long and slow march toward socialism. The Western orthodox Marxists (mainly the German Social-Democrats) opposed them for the sake of principle.

The Bolsheviks fought the Austrian Socialists over the question of cultural autonomy. Both groups belonged to the "Eastern" tendency; both were highly conscious of the importance of the national problem. The Austrian Socialists, living in a constitutional Empire, where gradual reforms were possible, saw the solution to the problem in a development toward the cultural autonomy of each nationality within the framework of a decentralized multi-national state. They agreed to apply the principle of decentralization not only to the nationalities as such, but also to the various national sections of the Austrian Socialist Party. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, living in a highly despotic state, in which violent revolution was the only possible means of action, were desirous not to reform the situation of the subject nationalities, but to split the Empire apart, to burst it asunder through the force of explosive nationalism. At the same time, clandestine action taught them to keep the revolutionary party highly centralized, and to counteract the centrifugal action of the nationalists through the solidarity of the united socialists of all nationalities.

Lenin fought an intense ideological battle against certain elements of the Western orthodox revolutionary Marxists assisted by groups within Lenin's own Bolshevik group. The Rosa Luxemburg-Radek-Bukharin-Piatakoff school saw the future in *social* terms (world-wide social revolution) while Lenin saw it in *social and national* terms (social revolution in the West plus national revolution in the East). In this view, Lenin was applying the experience of Russia to the world at large. Just as the force of proletarian and national revolution must

combine to overthrow Tsarist autocracy, thus the proletarian movement in Europe must combine with the nationalisms of the backward countries to overthrow world imperialism. Like Marx, Lenin declared that the East must aid the West. Like Proudhon, the socialists of the Luxemburg-Radek tendency saw the future exclusively in Western terms.

Lenin eliminated the distinction between Europe and the colonies in regard to the national question. He stated that the national and the colonial problems are one, that there is no basic difference between revolution in Ireland and revolution in Asia; that throughout the world bourgeois democracy must pave the way for proletarian socialism.

III

BOLSHEVISM AND REVOLUTIONARY NATIONALISM FROM 1917 TO 1920

The years 1917-1920 constitute a very neatly defined historical period, inasmuch as they comprise the first intensive world-wide offensive of the Revolution against the capitalist world. This period was characterized by "War Communism" inside the Soviet state, with extremely audacious social experimentation and attempts at completely egalitarian distribution of goods. On the international scene, the communist and left socialist parties of the world sought to encourage the revolutionary stirrings of the European workers and of the colonial nations, to bring about a speedy collapse of the capitalist system. The revolutionary offensive, after smashing the White armies inside Russia, passed on into neighboring areas, and reached its climax in the summer of 1920, when the vanguard of the Red Army, under the command of Tukhachevsky, knocked at the gates of Warsaw. At that time the second congress of the Communist International met, and its debates and resolutions reflected the spirit of the revolutionary offensive. Within the months following the second congress, however, the revolutionary upsurge was to die out progressively and entirely new tactics became necessary.

As far as the communist attitude toward nationalism during this period is concerned, two aspects deserve to be studied. The first is the nationality policy undertaken by the Soviets inside Russia. The second is the extension of that policy to the world scene through Soviet Russia's diplomacy and through the Comintern. The first aspect lies outside the subject of our study, but it needs to be outlined very briefly, in order to make the second — the international — aspect more comprehensible.¹

1. SOVIET NATIONALITY POLICY INSIDE RUSSIA.

During the interim period between the February and October revolutions, in April 1917, the Bolsheviks gathered for their seventh All-Russian congress. In the course of the debates at this congress, Lenin, who had just arrived from Switzerland, was criticized anew by some of his comrades for his theory of national self-determination. The

¹ For a detailed and scholarly study of the nationality settlement inside Russia, see Richard Pipes, *The Formation of the Soviet Union; Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923*, Harvard, 1954.

Leninist point of view was defended by Stalin, who reported on the national question.² Stalin stated that socialists must support the right of nations to secede, but he emphasized, more than Lenin had done, that the *right* to secede was something different from actual support of secession. "The question of the *right* of nations freely to secede must not be confused with the question that a nation must *necessarily* secede at any given moment . . . Thus we are at liberty to agitate for or against secession, according to the interests of the proletariat, of the proletarian revolution."³ Thus Stalin himself would be opposed to the secession of Transcaucasia, but nevertheless he would be obliged to grant the Transcaucasians the right to secede if they absolutely insisted on it.⁴ Within Russia, now that Tsarism had fallen, most nationalities would probably not wish to secede, Stalin declared, and their national feelings would be satisfied by an offer of *regional autonomy*, with frontiers determined by the population itself.⁵ As to the national minorities, they should have their educational, religious and cultural rights safeguarded by special laws. At the same time, the Party must reinforce its absolute organizational unity, so that the decentralization carried out on a regional basis would be supplemented by a simultaneous centralization carried out on the proletarian basis. In fact, the resolution which was adopted by the Congress recognized these four points: the right to secession, regional autonomy for the nationalities remaining inside Russia, laws guaranteeing the rights of minorities, the indivisibility of the Party.⁶

It deserves to be noticed that Stalin, in his supposed defense of established Leninist principles against Bukharin's and Dzerzhinsky's criticisms, emphasizes the subordination of national to communist interests far more than Lenin himself had done in his debate against Rosa Luxemburg and Piatakov. About to seize power and to be faced with the fact of a disintegrating empire, the Bolsheviks were tempted to sacrifice principles to the exigencies of survival and of State organization. After October, this tendency was accentuated, under the impact of the secession of the border lands. While the frankly annexationist theory continued to be denounced as "Great Russian chauvinism", the reinforcement of centralist tendencies expressed itself through the theory of "proletarian" as against "bourgeois" self-determination.

Inside Russia, the first year after the October revolution witnessed a strong movement of decentralization in all the Russian borderlands. Poland, Finland, and the Baltic States became completely detached; powerful autonomist movements developed in the Caucasus and in other parts of Russian Asia. The Bolsheviks sought to counteract the secessionist trend through the centralizing influence of the Party,

² I. Deutscher, *Stalin*, p. 143.

³ Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269-270.

according to Lenin's doctrine. But during this first period the centrifugal forces proved stronger than the centripetal ones. Thus in February 1918, the Menshevik Government of Georgia outlawed the Bolshevik party. The Bolsheviks attempted to regain power through revolts and strikes, but this policy failed.⁷

It was Stalin, as Commissar of Nationalities, who struck a fresh note, and announced that a new period was beginning, in regard to nationality policy inside Russia. The centrifugal trend was too powerful; the Party was unable to counteract it by propaganda alone. Already on December 12, 1917, Stalin expressed the view, in regard to the Ukraine, that national self-determination may become an instrument of counter-revolution, and that it should only be granted if the *working population* of the area in question demands it.⁸ And on another occasion he stated that "it is necessary to limit the principle of free self-determination of nations, by granting it to the toilers and refusing it to the bourgeoisie".⁹

In order to further prepare the terrain ideologically for stronger measures against secessionist movements, Stalin wrote an article which was published in *Pravda* on November 6th and 19th, 1918.

The February Revolution, Stalin wrote, was bourgeois and called forth bourgeois-democratic movements among all oppressed nationalities inside Russia. The bourgeois nationalist movements quickly proved themselves incapable of meeting the demands of the toiling masses. It therefore soon became obvious that the struggle against imperialism could only be carried out successfully by each nation's working class attacking its own national bourgeoisie. "The old bourgeois-democratic interpretation of the principle of self-determination became a fiction and lost its revolutionary significance."¹⁰

After the October Revolution, which was socialist, Stalin continues, the question became different. He no longer refers to the self-determination of nations, but to the self-determination of the "toiling masses of the oppressed nations".¹¹ Before the October Revolution, the national liberation movements of the oppressed nationalities had a revolutionary significance; after October these movements, on the contrary, became reactionary. Conventional "bourgeois self-determination" became an instrument of counter-revolution when directed against the Soviet power, and the time had come to proclaim the right of self-determination of the *workers*. According to Stalin, the workers would naturally choose to remain linked to the Soviet state, for the Russian heartland had become the embodiment of the proletarian revolution, spreading invincibly from the center toward the border regions.

⁷ Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 69-70.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

The implication of this attitude is clear: If in Russia History has passed beyond the point where secession ("bourgeois self-determination") is progressive, then *proletarian* self-determination becomes the essential force. Since the Bolshevik Party was considered the purest representative of the workers, this new doctrine of *proletarian* self-determination enabled the Party to substitute itself for the people in fighting for territorial union with Russia. This new interpretation also offered the Bolsheviks an excuse to intervene by force and to carry out an annexationist policy, since secession from Soviet Russia had become synonymous with counter-revolution. Stalin describes the further progress of the revolution as a fight to crush the secessionist bourgeois governments between the Russian Red power from without and the workers' revolution from within. "Thus was formed a socialist alliance of the workers and peasants of all Russia against the counter-revolutionary alliance of the national-bourgeois 'governments' of the border regions of Russia."¹²

At the 8th congress of the Bolshevik Party, in March 1919, the new, centralist tendency in dealing with national problems inside Russia was expressed in an extremist form by Bukharin, who proposed the slogan of "national self-determination" only for underdeveloped colonial areas, while to the advanced nations the slogan of "self-determination of the working classes" should be applied.¹³ Lenin attacked this stand and qualified it as "Great Russian chauvinism". Nevertheless, he himself took a step away from his own national self-determination doctrine, by proposing a program which included the following point:

"As to the question who is the carrier of the nation's will to separation, the Russian Communist Party stands on the historico-class point of view, taking into consideration the level of historical development on which a given nation stands: on the road from the Middle Ages to bourgeois democracy, or from bourgeois democracy to Soviet or proletarian democracy, and so forth."¹⁴

The case in which the Bolsheviks were to manifest their neo-annexationist policy in the most startling manner, was that of Georgia. Ever since the February Revolution, Georgia had been ruled by a Menshevik government, solidly based on the will of the majority of the population, and had declared its secession from Russia. The Bolshevik minority repeatedly tried to gain control of the Georgian workers' and peasants' soviets and to lead the country to re-unification with Russia. "Bourgeois" self-determination had taken place; the next step must be "proletarian" reaffiliation to the Great Russian workers' state. Failing to gain control of the Georgian soviets, the Bolsheviks tried to produce a violent uprising against the Menshevik government. This offered the Mensheviks the opportunity to outlaw the Bolshevik party, to jail or

¹² Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

¹³ Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

shoot a certain number of its leaders and to burn down rebellious villages. This repression provided the Bolsheviks with excellent propaganda material. They claimed that Georgia was ruled by a clique of bloodthirsty White Guards subservient to the interventionist powers.¹⁵ They also accused the Georgian government of giving aid and comfort to the White army of Denikin.¹⁶ This latter accusation probably has a strong basis of truth.¹⁷ It was not unnatural, and not exceptionally immoral, for embattled Bolshevik Russia to undertake military measures against a basically hostile Georgia. What was less natural, was the fact that Russian military intervention was misrepresented as a revolution of the Georgian workers, who supposedly were calling their comrades of the Red Army to their aid. Actually only a small minority raised the banner of revolt in Georgia, and — suspiciously enough — only in the area near the Bolshevik border.¹⁸ The Red Army occupied the country, and under its supervision a Georgian Bolshevik Soviet, representing only a minority of the workers, voted the adhesion of the land to the Russian state.

Trotsky, after explaining why the security of Russia made the military occupation of Georgia necessary, seeks to justify the fact of annexation and affirms the principle of proletarian expansionism:

“We do not only recognize, but we also give full support to the principle of self-determination, wherever it is directed against feudal, capitalist and imperialist states. But whenever the fiction of self-determination, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, becomes a weapon directed against the proletarian revolution, we have no occasion to treat this fiction differently from the other ‘principles’ of democracy perverted by capitalism.”¹⁹

This is probably the clearest formulation that has ever been made of the practical implications of the Bolshevik doctrine of self-determination. It is an affirmation of the intention of the Soviet State to practice a policy of expansionism, at least in certain cases. The right of self-determination, which is a great “principle” when directed against a capitalist state, becomes a “fiction” when directed against Soviet power.

In spirit this statement is irreconcilable with Lenin’s insistence on the need to overcome national resentments through the right of secession and on the recognition of secession as an “absolute” right. It becomes, however, compatible with Leninism, on the basis of the fiction that the Soviet State is *identical* with the Revolution and that the Communist Party is *identical* with the Proletariat. This somewhat mystical but convenient fiction was beginning to permeate the Bolshevik ranks.

¹⁵ L.D. Trotsky, *Between Red and White*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-37.

¹⁷ L. Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, vol. 1, p. 219.

¹⁸ K. Kautsky, *Georgien, eine Sozialdemokratische Bauernrepublik*.

¹⁹ Trotsky, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

There is evidence to show that Lenin himself did not approve of the complete annexation of Georgia and that his hand was forced by Stalin and others.²⁰ Nevertheless, the *letter* of Lenin's teachings could admirably well serve the designs of those who were working to destroy its subjectively revolutionary, and even democratic, *spirit*.

2. THE INTERNATIONAL AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION.

Special attention was given by the Bolsheviks to the question of self-determination of the Muslim subjects of Russia. The Muslim peoples of Russia—Tatars, Kirghiz, Caucasians—could have an extremely great influence on the Muslim nations living outside the Red state. By their attitude toward the Russian Muslim, the Soviets could hope to gain the friendship and support of the Turks, Persians, Afghans, Egyptians, Indonesians, and North Africans, all of whom were linked together by the mighty bond of Islam, and all of whom were to stir angrily against European tutelage. On December 19, 1917, a proclamation to the Muslims of Russia and of the East was launched by the Soviet government. This proclamation was intended for the Muslims inside Russia as well as for those outside, and presented the local nationality policy of the Soviets as the key to their liberating program in the whole world. To the Muslims in Russia, the Soviet government announced:

"Muslims of Russia... and all you whose mosques and prayer houses have been destroyed, whose beliefs and customs have been trampled underfoot by the tsars and the oppressors of Russia: Your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are henceforth free and inviolable. Organize your national life in full freedom. This is your right. Know that your rights and those of all the peoples of Russia are under the mighty protection of the Revolution and of its organs, the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants."²¹

As to the Muslims of countries other than Russia:

"To the Muslims of the East, the Persians, Turks, Arabs, Indians and all those who for centuries have been the objects of bargains, to all those whose stolen goods the European bandits try to share among themselves, we declare that the Tsar's secret treaties concerning control of the Straits, treaties which were confirmed by the fallen Kerensky, are hereby declared null and void... Constantinople must remain in the hands of the Turks.

"We declare null and void the treaty concerning the partition of Persia...

"We declare null and void the treaty concerning the partition of Turkey and the separation of Turkish Armenia from Turkey. As soon

²⁰ Cf. Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

²¹ *Revue du monde musulman*, tome LI, 1922, Part I, p. 8.

as military operations will be over, the Armenians, too, will have the right to decide their own political destiny.

"Neither Russia, nor her revolutionary government seek to oppress you, but the European imperialist robbers who have transformed your countries into colonies.

"Drive out those robbers who are the oppressors of your country. . .

"Comrades! Brothers! Let us all march together toward an honest and democratic peace. In the folds of our banners we bring liberty to the oppressed peoples of the earth. . .

"The President of the Council of People's Commissars,
V. Ulianov (Lenin).

"The Commissar for Nationalities,¹
Djugashvili (Stalin)." ²²

Up to 1920, the attention of the Bolsheviks was mainly centered around the civil war and the workers' movements in Germany and other European countries. After the proclamation to the Muslim workers, exhorting them to rise against imperialism, the Soviet government had little time to devote to the affairs of the colonies. It did, however, carry out the impressive gesture of renouncing all special privileges which the Tsar's Government had obtained in the countries of the East. Thus on January 14, 1918, the Soviet Government denounced the unequal treaty of 1907 with Persia.²³ On July 25, 1919, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs sent a note to Peking, expressing Moscow's willingness to renounce all concessions and special privileges which the Tsars' Government had gained from unequal treaties with China.²⁴ These startling, unselfish gestures were a part of the general campaign to win the support of the underdeveloped countries of the East against imperialism.

At the founding congress of the Communist International, in Moscow from March 2 to 19, 1919, attention was focused mainly on Europe and on the movement of the Western proletariat. Nevertheless, a considerable number of representatives of colonial and semi-colonial countries had appeared. The "united group of Eastern peoples of Russia" was represented by Russians, but the representatives of the underdeveloped countries outside Russia were genuine nationals of these areas. Thus there was a delegation of Turkey (Subhi); Georgia (Slagenti); Persia (Husseinov); Chinese Socialist Party (Lao Si-tchao); Korean Socialist Workers' Party (Chan-Gun-Kug); Turkestan (Jalymov); Azerbeidjan (Bagirov). In view of the lack of importance of the parties they represented, these delegates, however, only attended the congress as consultative members without vote.²⁵

²² *Ibid.*, part I, p. 8-9.

²³ Fischer, Louis, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, v. I, p. 287.

²⁴ Yakhontoff, V.A., *Russia and the Soviet Union in the Far East*, p. 134.

²⁵ *Der 1. Kongress Der Kommunistischen Internationale. Protokoll der Verhandlungen*, p. 5.

The manifesto of the Communist International, written by Trotsky, and read by him at the fifth session of the first congress, makes only casual mention of the underdeveloped countries. This casual mention is interesting however, in so far as it expresses a point of view which is closer to that of Rosa Luxemburg and Piatakov than to that of Lenin. Trotsky wrote, in fact, that one of the special phenomena of the first World War was the complete domination of the small nations by the large imperialist states, and the impossibility for any small state to achieve its independence and to carry out a real struggle for liberation.²⁶ Trotsky announces that "only the proletarian revolution will be able to give the small nations the possibility of free existence, by freeing the productive forces of all countries from the fetters of the national state, by uniting the peoples in the closest economic cooperation on the basis of a general economic plan, and by thus granting even to the smallest and weakest nation the possibility to be sovereign over its national culture, without thereby damaging the united and centralized economy of Europe and of the whole world."²⁷

This sounds more like Luxemburg doctrine than like Leninism. Trotsky goes on to explain that the world war had succeeded in drawing all colonies into itself, and thus to bring the question of revolution to the colonies. A number of nationalist revolts in the oppressed and colonial countries, Ireland, Madagascar, India, had brought the attention of the whole civilized world to bear on regions which had previously lain outside the realm of historical movement.²⁸

But the proletarian revolution in Europe was the essential condition for the liberation of the colonies, according to Trotsky. Europe would be the leader in the revolution. Trotsky was definite in his Western orientation. "The liberation of the colonies is only possible accompanied by that of the metropolises. The workers and peasants not only of Annam, Algeria, Bengal, but also of Persia and Armenia will only obtain the possibility for independent existence on the day when the workers of England and France will have overthrown Lloyd George and Clémenceau and taken the state power into their own hands. In the more developed colonies the struggle even now does not only take place under the banner of national liberation but shows from the beginning a definite social character. Just as capitalist Europe has drawn the backward regions into the capitalist whirlpool, so will socialist Europe come to the aid of the liberated colonies with its techniques, its organization, its spiritual influence, in order to facilitate their transition to a planned socialist economy. Colonial slaves of Africa and Asia! The hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe will also be the hour of your liberation!"²⁹

This Western-oriented version of the national-colonial question was accepted by the Congress without any objection. Lenin himself

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-176.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 176-177.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

subscribed to this as well as to the other parts of the manifesto. Indeed, in 1919 the proletarian revolutionary stirrings in Europe were so strong, especially in Germany, where Soviets had been established and where Spartacists and left Independent Socialists were leading masses of workers, that none of the Bolsheviks had any doubt as to the imminence of the socialist transformation of the West.

At this early date the Bolsheviks were still a genuinely revolutionary party, driven by idealism at least as much as by power considerations, and not yet dreaming of permanent hegemony over the world's communist forces. Lenin and his comrades looked at themselves, in 1919, as caretakers of the revolutionary movement, whose leadership they would hand over to their more qualified and "cultured" German brothers, as soon as the latter seized power. Admiration for the German people as the supposed paragons of progressive dynamism was a feature of communism ever since Marx, and a feature of Russian thought ever since Peter the Great. This myth of "revolutionary" Germany stayed alive in the minds of the Bolsheviks until the middle thirties.

One year later, in 1920, the world situation had changed. The Spartacist and left Socialist upsurge in Germany had been broken. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were dead. Europe was still in a process of rather intense revolutionary fermentation, but in the meantime important events had taken place in Asia also, re-establishing the balance between East and West and thus vindicating Lenin's faith in the independent national liberation struggle of the backward countries as against Trotsky's, Bukharin's and Piatakov's Western orientation. The new revolutionary centers in the East, which drew the Bolsheviks' attention back to the question of national and colonial revolution, were mainly, Persia⁸⁰ and Turkey.

By May, 1920, the White army of Denikin had been beaten and driven back beyond the Caucasus into Persia. Denikin's fleet took refuge in the Persian port of Enzeli, which was under British military occupation. Fearing that the British might re-equip Denikin's men and ships for another anti-Soviet expedition, the Bolsheviks sent out a Red squadron commanded by a young man of exceptional energy, Raskolnikov. On May 18, Raskolnikov's nine destroyers opened fire against Enzeli and against the nearby British base of Ghazian. The Bolsheviks demanded that all Denikinist war material be handed over to them. After some hesitation, the British—who had received orders not to engage in any direct fights with the Reds—agreed to this demand. Denikin's ships and arms were turned over to the Bolsheviks, the British marched off toward Teheran, Raskolnikov's men landed, and the red flag of the workers' republic was raised over Enzeli.⁸¹

⁸⁰ We are calling Iran by its ancient name of Persia, since this is the name the communists used at the time in their discussions and resolutions.

⁸¹ *Revue du Monde Musulman*, t. 52, 1922, p. 85-86.

Raskolnikov's landing at Enzeli was accompanied by a large-scale popular uprising in the whole region of Ghilan, under the leadership of a veteran rebel chief, Kutchuk Khan. Kutchuk had already led earlier peasant uprisings, in which he had at different times solicited the aid of the Germans and of the Turks. Raskolnikov appeared as a natural ally. He marched inland from Enzeli, joined forces with Kutchuk Khan's rebels, and occupied the city of Recht at the end of May 1920. Kutchuk Khan established himself at Recht and proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Persia. Throughout the territory of Ghilan, the peasants, who groaned under a particularly heavy feudal yoke, rose in support of the revolution. By July the united forces of Raskolnikov and Kutchuk Khan had taken over the whole province of Ghilan and marched toward Teheran.

The Persian government counterattacked with troops commanded by White Russian officers, who, however, were so unpopular among the Persian country population, that their attempts at repressing the revolt only added fuel to the flames.³² In the meantime, Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, had informed the British and Persian Governments that Raskolnikov was only attempting to defend Russia against White attacks which might start from Persia.³³ Desirous to see Persia pacified without actual military intervention on their part, the British thereupon prevailed upon the Teheran Government to dismiss the commander of the White troops, Colonel Starosselsky, and his lieutenants. A new cabinet was formed in Teheran under the chairmanship of Sepahdar Aazam, and the White officers were expelled from the country.³⁴ In the meantime the revolutionary situation had become more complicated. The Azerbeidjanian nationalists were supporting the Bolsheviks and Kutchuk Khan. German agents, strange leftovers from the World War, were in their turn encouraging the Azerbeidjanians.³⁵ The Kurds also joined the fray, on the side of the rebels. All these nationalities were fighting in the name of national self-determination and independence from the rule of the Teheran Government. Since the Muslim bands committed atrocities against the Christian nationalities, especially the Assyrians, the latter rose under the command of the intrepid Agha Petros to defend the Persian Government against the rebel onslaught.³⁶ At the same time, dissensions broke out among the Azerbeidjanian nationalists, with the more moderate elements disapproving of the Bolshevik alliance and seeking a compromise with the Teheran Government.³⁷ In the face of these obstacles, and fearing the eventuality of direct British intervention, the Soviet Government ordered Raskolnikov to halt. On October 22, 1920, the Central Committee of

³² *Revue du Monde Musulman*, p. 88.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 95-96.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102-104.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 104-105.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

the Communist Party of Iran declared that the proletarian revolution would have to wait until the bourgeois revolution was accomplished.³⁸ At the same time, the Soviet Government opened talks with the official Persian Government regarding an eventual treaty of peace and friendship. The Soviets were abandoning the ultra-revolutionary tactics of the period of the first upsurge. A new, more moderate phase was being opened. The end of the ultra-revolutionary phase was not openly announced, however. Raskolnikov, on the contrary, issued a declaration to the effect that Kutchuk Khan, whom he was leaving behind, would continue the struggle in the name of the world revolution. "When I was leaving", Raskolnikov explained, "he (Kutchuk) asked me to give his sincere regards to Comrade Lenin and to tell him that he will act as his disciple, and that the alliance between Soviet Russia and revolutionary Persia will never be broken".³⁹ But in reality the opening of negotiations with the official Persian government meant the sacrifice of Kutchuk Khan and the cause of social revolution in Persia.

During the same period, events of revolutionary significance were taking place in the relations between Soviet Russia and Turkey. On December 5, 1917, an armistice had been concluded between autonomous Transcaucasia and Turkey. This armistice was broken by the Turks in February 1918, when the commander of the Caucasian front, Vehib Pasha, began to advance in the direction of Erzerum. At the same time the Turkish Government demanded that Russia grant full independence to the Caucasian peoples of Turco-Tatar stock. The Soviet Government, in the name of national self-determination, declared itself willing to do so, and peace negotiations began at Batum. Sections of the Turkish forces continued, however, to advance, and occupied Kars. Under Turkish pressure, Transcaucasia was split up into the three autonomous Republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbeidjan. On September 15, 1918, Turkish troops occupied Baku.

Very soon after this, however, the traditional hostility between Russians and Turks yielded to a new sort of relationship, in which the Soviet policy of supporting revolutionary nationalism was to be successfully applied. In November 1918, an English army commanded by General Thompson moved into the Caucasian area, while the Turks, defeated and humiliated, retreated. From that point on, Great Britain became the main object of Turkish hatred. The climax of Turkish humiliation was reached on March 16, 1920, when British forces occupied Constantinople. Through British intervention, Soviet-Turkish understanding grew rapidly. In 1919, Mustapha Subhi founded the first Turkish communist group in Constantinople. Turkish nationalists, led by Kemal Pasha, appealed to the Soviets for support in the anti-imperialist struggle against perfidious Albion, and when the Red Army entered Azerbeidjan on April 27, 1920, it was aided by Turkish officers. From

³⁸ *Revue du Monde Musulman*, p. 105.

³⁹ E.V., "On the Caspian and in Persia", *Soviet Russia*, vol. III, No. 17, Oct. 23, 1920, p. 393-395.

the very beginning, the Soviets had taken a friendly attitude toward Kemal, the leader of the nationalist extremists, and Kemal was looking to Russia for support against Britain. On April 26, 1920, Kemal proposed a treaty of military and political alliance to the Russians, but the latter politely refused, since such a treaty might have obliged the Red Army to intervene on the Turkish side against the Greeks.⁴⁰ Friendly relations were, however, established between revolutionary Russia and revolutionary Turkey, by the time the second congress of the Comintern met. Like other nationalists in backward countries, Kemal was impressed by the ideological force of communism, and sought to use this force in the service of the Turkish national-revolutionary state. For propagandist purposes, he identified the national with the social question, and announced, that "the proletarian masses of the West" and "the oppressed peoples of Asia and Africa" would free the world from the rule of the "*bourgeoisie*".⁴¹ In Turkish internal affairs, however, Kemal knew very well how to make a distinction between national and social revolution, as he soon was to show by ruthlessly suppressing the communists in his own ranks. This Kemalist policy of collaborating with the communists in foreign affairs while suppressing them inside Turkey was based on an agreement concluded by Kemal's agents with Russian communists at Baku in November 1919. According to this agreement the communists promised not to carry out subversive activities inside Turkey.⁴²

Persia and Turkey were not the only Muslim countries in which communism and nationalism seemed to form a united front against the Entente. In Afghanistan, Amanullah Khan, leader of the Young Afghan Party and of the Pan-Islamists, seized power, influenced by the revolutionary wave which was sweeping neighboring Muslim regions on the other side of the Russo-Afghan border. Amanullah promptly began to institute revolutionary reforms, which seemed like a continuation of the changes brought about by the Bolsheviks among the Muslim population on the other side of the frontier. In Afghanistan, like in Soviet Turkestan and Caucasia, schools were founded, taxes were collected, the army was modernized, and lovely faces were unveiled under the disapproving eyes of pious oldsters who called on Allah to punish such wickedness. Afghanistan in its turn constituted a bridge across which the revolutionary contagion rolled into Northern India.

At the same time, national and social revolt combined into a militant anti-imperialist movement in the far-away Dutch East Indies. Ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, a proletariat, partly agricultural and partly industrial, had begun to develop and to consolidate itself on the island of Java. Javanese labor unions, which originally had been composed exclusively of privileged, well-paid Dutch workers,

⁴⁰ Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, v. I, p. 390.

⁴¹ Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs*, v. I, p. 390, and E.H. Carr, *A History of Soviet Russia: The Bolshevik Revolution*, v. III, p. 296.

⁴² Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

soon were forced to open their ranks to natives, and by 1913 the Association of Railway and Tramway Workers, strongest of the unions, was completely dominated by the native element. But the most militant of all unions was the all-native Union of Pawnshop Workers.⁴³ In 1914, Dutch socialists, among whom Sneevliet (Maring) was the most outstanding leader, founded the Indian Social Democratic Association in Soerabaya. Sneevliet, who was chairman of the railway workers' union, began to publish a socialist newspaper of very radical tendency, *Het Vrije Woord*.⁴⁴ Sneevliet and his followers represented the social revolutionary element in the Indonesian events.

The nationalist element was represented by the rather moderate Boedi Oetomo and the more radical Sarekat Islam (Society of Islam) parties. The Sarekat Islam had originated as a party of victims of Chinese usurers residing in Java. From mere protest against Chinese business practices, the party quickly evolved toward a program of national liberation from foreign rule. In 1919, the Javanese Social Democratic Party was split into a moderate and an extremist wing. The extremist wing, in 1920, became the Javanese section of the Third International and established close relations with the Sarekat Islam. The leaders of the new Communist Party of Indonesia, Sneevliet, Semaoen, and Tan Malaka, decided that their comrades should individually join the Sarekat Islam and work within it. The communist fraction inside the nationalist party succeeded in gradually obtaining a prominent position and in driving the whole movement toward the Left.⁴⁵

At the moment when the second congress of the Communist International met, in July 1920, the revolutionary wave had consequently passed from Europe to Asia. While in Europe the revolutionary situation was remaining static, Asia was bursting into motion. It was therefore obvious to the Bolshevik leaders that a definite program for the Eastern countries would have to be worked out. The formula used by Trotsky in the manifesto of the first congress, according to which Europe would undergo its revolution first and then carry it to the under-developed countries, seemed no longer true. While the proletariat of Europe was slowly beginning to relapse into reformism, the nationalists of Asia were raising the flag of a revolution that was not socialist but Jacobin. Like in 1848, the nationalist convulsions of the East made the established order shake more drastically than the social fermentation of the West.

In analysing the national and colonial question at the second congress, Lenin and his colleagues had to be conscious of two different tactical situations in the East—of situations in which the element of social revolt played a leading part, as in the case of Kutchuk Khan's

⁴³ *Revue du Monde Musulman*, v. LI, 1922, p. 56.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-61. Cf. J.Th.P. Blumberger, *Le Communisme aux Indes néerlandaises*.

peasant rebellion, and of situations in which the national element predominated, as in the case of Turkey or Afghanistan.

3. THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL: THE MEN.

The leading figures of the third International had a variety of different backgrounds. Few of these leaders of the proletariat were of working-class stock; most of them had been born in the middle class or even the upper classes of their respective countries.

Among the Russian communists, there were two main types of leaders — a majority of cosmopolitan intellectuals who had spent years in exile in Western and Central Europe, and a minority — which was to grow steadily in importance as the years went by — of what could be called technicians of the revolution. The former were in undisputed prominence during the first years which followed the October events — theirs was the great vision, the combination of realism and idealism, of scientific insight and of ideological exaltation, which corresponded to the spirit of a great social upheaval. But after the first wave of revolution had subsided, after the longing for a new world had given way to more prosaic longings for bread, for security, for comfort, the second sort of men, dry, plodding, often unimaginative and dull, but capable of tremendous painstaking labor in the realm of administration, rose to the fore.

Perhaps the powerful figure of Vladimir Ilyitch Lenin alone rose above these two types and was capable of expressing both periods — the period of the revolution itself and the period of post-revolutionary organization. Lenin possessed the capacity of transcending his own class origin, and of becoming a nearly perfect link between the workers and the intellectuals.

Lenin's revolt against the existing social order was based on personal experiences — he grew up in the atmosphere of revolt which characterized the last part of the nineteenth century. Among other things he was marked by the fate of his older brother, who was hanged for terrorist activities. But Lenin chose not to throw himself into the heroic but irrational struggle which the Populist (Narodnik) terrorists carried on against the tsarist government. There was in him a tremendous longing for rationalization, for the Absolute of concrete, factual knowledge. Perhaps he was possessed by such immense emotional possibilities, by such potential volcanoes of passion, that the subjection of his emotions to the rigid discipline of Marxist thought was a necessity. Some men who feel the possibility of self-destructive emotional exaggerations, consciously choose the path of cold rationalism, in the knowledge that their success and their very life depend on it. Lenin's self-discipline, his contempt of emotional exaggerations, his constant search for the most concrete, scientific, impersonal formulation of ideas, were the traits of a man who consciously seeks to control his

daemon. The perceptive one among his collaborators, particularly Trotsky, were aware of Lenin's half-suppressed emotional intensity. They saw the darkness of ferocious anger or the heat of exaltation rush into his face on many occasions — always to be immediately checked by the will-power of the man, to be relegated to the regions of his self which only he and no other must know, to be clamped down by the self-imposed rule of reason. Only his closest associates had the experience of seeing the man Lenin yield to his more intimate feelings. Thus, there was the moment, after the success of the October uprising, when he stared with unbelief and fright at the immensity of his responsibilities and murmured: "It makes one dizzy."⁴⁶ These revelations of the inner man were immediately followed by a self-conscious laugh, by a sudden, almost violent return to the realm of cold-blooded reasoning.

Lenin possessed exceptional brain power and nervous strength. He was capable — without excessive use of stimulants — to keep his mind working at its maximum pitch day after day and year after year. He was able to carry on the most diverse kinds of intellectual work within the same period of time. He could spend hours in the writing of an ideological essay, and then from one moment to the next, begin to work at the solution of intricate minor problems of administration. But whatever he did — his great fundamental vision never left him, and he always subordinated every detail of his activities to his all-embracing objectives.

He was a man of action more than a theoretician. Marxism, for him, was not an interpretation of social dynamics and an explanation of general natural and social phenomena, but a tool in the active struggle for power. His life was an affirmation of the personal voluntarist principle, rather than of social determinism. His actions often took the place of what economic determinism *might* have been in a fully capitalist type of society, and were justified *après coup* by Marxist arguments. "He left Marxism poorer than he found it",⁴⁷ as far as pure theory is concerned, but he made the greatest of all contributions to the practical art of political action. Just as all modern social thinkers, whether pro- or anti-Marxist, cannot afford to ignore Marx's method entirely, and have to be "post-Marxist" in their approach,⁴⁸ thus modern statesmen and politicians are forced to be "post-Leninist" and to adapt their craft to the fundamental transformations brought about by the great Russian leader.

He was a hard task-master, not only toward himself but also toward his comrades. His anger at their mistakes or deviations could be

⁴⁶ Trotsky, *Ma Vie*, v. III, p. 11.

⁴⁷ J. Plamenatz, *op. cit.*, p. xxi.

⁴⁸ "Anyone who wishes to understand the modern world, whether he love or hate Communism, must be a 'post-Marxist'. Pre-Marxist social thinking is as useful as pre-Newtonian scientific thinking." H. Seton-Watson, *The Pattern of Communist Revolution*, p. ix.

extreme, but it was always an anger directed at the mistake and not at the man as such. In his private letters he sometimes rebuked his comrades in the most ferocious manner for this or that mistake — but suddenly he would pass over to personal considerations, and conclude a violent polemic with a sentence like: “Dear X, take care of your cold and grow well quickly.”⁴⁹ This detachment, this capacity for a lucid distinction between the ideas and the men, between the objective and the subjective element, won him not only the adherence but the actual love of his associates.

Lev Davidovitch Trotsky equalled Lenin in intelligence, transcended him in brilliance of expression, but was his inferior as far as the capacity for adaptation to changing circumstances was concerned. In Trotsky, the rule of reason over emotions was less solidly established than in Lenin. His intellectual grasp of revolutionary situations was masterful, and his greatness as a practical worker is also undisputed. But there was in Trotsky the impatience of the man of letters. From the writing of brilliant polemics he turned to the practical action of leading the October uprising and, later, of organizing the Red Army. A magnificent organizer he was, but his spirit constantly longed for the realm of general ideology, for a return from the military statistics and co-ordination work to the great flashing battles of the pen, in which he was an unparalleled master. Of the two leaders, Lenin and Trotsky, the former was the greater, for he was able to cast his creative spirit into the severe molds of prosaic and efficient action and to find his fulfillment in down-to-earth tasks, while Trotsky's spirit only descended into the more earthy and unspectacular realm for intermittent periods, constantly longing to soar up again into the regions where the written and spoken Word reigned supreme. For Lenin there was no contradiction between thought and action, while for Trotsky the two essentially remained separated. And therefore, in spite of Trotsky's great competence in both fields of endeavour, Lenin stands out as the greater one.⁵⁰

The question of Lenin's and Trotsky's ethics has frequently been raised. Many pious conformists have looked at them as devils incarnate, while their followers tended to invest them with the aura of near-sainthood. Lenin and Trotsky themselves refused to discuss all problems of ethics not directly determined by materialist dialectics. They had nothing but contempt for those of their opponents who phrased political problem in terms of moral considerations. But like Marx and Engels they took for granted certain ethical standards, based on the sum total of human experience and evolution. It was beyond dispute for them, for example, that the bloodshed involved in the revolutionary process should be kept down to a minimum. And they differed from certain of their successors in that they never dreamed of fighting disagreeing and deviating party comrades with the weapons of bloody repression. Their private lives were above reproach, and would have

⁴⁹ Cf. Lenin, *Letters to Maxim Gorky*.

⁵⁰ Cf. I. Deutscher, *The Prophet Armed*.

met with the warmest approval of Queen Victoria. Particularly in the case of Lenin, the separation of the objective and the subjective elements, the confining of all that was revolutionary to the impersonal domain, had gone to such a point that his private life and tastes were the very model of middle class domestic bliss.

Lenin and Trotsky, these two men of exceptional intellectual power and human stature, were surrounded by a host of lesser lights. Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Radek, Lunatcharsky, Piatakov, were brilliant men and devoted revolutionaries, whose intellect and power could not, however, be compared to those of a Lenin or even a Trotsky. Zinoviev, Kamenev and Radek were controversial figures. All three of them were typical intellectuals in exile—brilliant, full of revolutionary hatred against a society based on ruthless exploitation, sincerely devoted to Marxism, driven by a great deal of hate and a portion of love. Zinoviev, Kamenev and Radek, however, were less stable individuals than Trotsky, not to speak of Lenin. Their personal ambitions were extremely strong, and even before the October revolution they tended to carry on intrigues against comrades who rivalled with them. This tendency toward intriguing and plots was particularly marked in Zinoviev, whom Angelica Balabanova called “the most despicable individual I have ever met”.⁵¹ The three men also possessed a dose of opportunism and of occasional moral cowardice.⁵²

But the fact of their martyrdom at the hands of Stalin and Vishinsky in 1936 demonstrates that even though they could be opportunists at times, there were limits below which they could not go.

Radek stands out among the three as the “schlemihl”—the man who always keeps his appointment with bad luck. All the old Bolsheviks indulged in a great deal of loose talking, but none of them managed to make as many wild statements at the wrong time as Karl Radek. He was emotional and emphatic, and he made it easy for his opponents to attack and refute him. In his personal appearance and demeanor—he was the Bohemian among his outwardly sedate colleagues—he seems to have had the capacity for “rubbing people the wrong way”. Things which were easily forgiven to others were held against Radek forever. Once, in exile, he borrowed an overcoat (or was it a pair of trousers?) and failed to return it in due time. For that harmless *lapsus* he was classed as a “thief” for the rest of his life by the owner of the fateful garment and by the latter’s friends.⁵³

Bukharin was a man of theory—an extremely intelligent Marxist economist and ideologist. He was generally beloved among his comrades. He equalled Zinoviev, Kamenev and Radek in intellectual brilliance and in basic revolutionary sincerity and idealism. He lacked some of their less agreeable traits, and apparently did not indulge in

⁵¹ A. Balabanova, *My Life as a Rebel*, pp. 243-244.

⁵² Shown by their rather unprincipled maneuvering between Stalin and Trotsky during the twenties.

⁵³ Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, p. 202.

petty intrigues at any time. A rather dark part of his activities came in 1926-27, when he attacked Trotsky and Zinoviev with such venom and violence that one cannot read some of his speeches without a slight feeling of revulsion. But it is probable that he sincerely believed that he was carrying out a necessary house-cleaning in the Party, at that time. In 1936, incapable of complete submission to Stalin, he joined Zinoviev and Kamenev in death at the hands of the executioner.

The other type of Bolshevik — the less brilliant, more down-to-earth, more plodding kind — found its prototype in Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin. It is unnecessary to dwell on the man's ruthless and criminal traits — or on his evident greatness. By their very origins and upbringing, men like Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, and even the shrewd and kindly Kalinin were thrown into conflict with the westernized intellectuals of Trotsky's or Zinoviev's type. They were of lower middle-class or working class origin, were largely self-taught, lacking in intellectual polish. While the intellectuals were in exile, carrying on theoretical discussions in the cafés of Vienna, Paris, Zurich and Geneva, the men of Stalin's type lived the lives of revolutionary workers inside Russia — agitating, organizing, plotting, being deported to Siberia. It is not surprising that they resented the attitude of a Bukharin or a Radek — who probably could not refrain from treating them with a faint intellectual contempt. While the exiles had worked with their brains, Stalin's men had worked with their hands, and they resented the fact that the intellectuals held all the main leadership positions. The intellectuals were able to represent the working class in its periods of *revolutionary exaltation*, while Stalin was a representative of the people in its more simple, plodding, *day-by-day existence*. Only Lenin was able to span both aspects. After Lenin's death it was therefore inevitable that the Stalin fraction should clash violently with the purely intellectual group, and that it should become predominant. For the time of revolutionary exaltation was short-lived, and after its end the Soviet State needed organizers more than agitators, statisticians more than prophets. The more primitive and peasant-like character of a Stalin also corresponded much more to the Eastward trend which the Bolshevik experiment was gradually to assume, than the character of a Trotsky or a Zinoviev.⁵⁴

Among the non-Russian communists who played an important role in the International as far as the national-colonial question is concerned, the most outstanding figure is that of the Indian M. N. Roy. While the Western communists passed from the struggle for proletarian revolution to the national problem, only becoming interested in the latter because it had certain bearings on the social question, the Eastern leaders of the Comintern, and Roy in particular, went the opposite way. The young Roy began as an ardent nationalist. His was the longing for national dignity and the hatred of foreign rule which, ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, was throwing the whole ambitious, idealistic and

⁵⁴ I. Deutscher, *Stalin*.

humiliated middle-class intelligentsia of Asia into the anti-colonialist battle. Roy took up the study of Marxism in the process of search for a path toward national liberation. For years, even after he had begun to read Marxist literature, his nationalism was stronger than his social consciousness. At the outbreak of the first World War, when he was in Berlin, he tried to induce the German admiralty to send a squadron to liberate India from the British.⁵⁵ Almost immediately afterwards, however, he fell under the influence of the Bolsheviks and of the most revolutionary Western socialists, abandoned nationalism totally and absolutely, and began to think of the world exclusively in terms of social revolution. Lenin invited him to represent India at the second congress of the Comintern. Roy, who was twenty-two years old at the time, saw the world in terms of simple Absolutes, and planned to advocate an immediate proletarian revolution for India. Lenin calmed the ardent young man, explained to him that in underdeveloped countries preliminary phases of development were necessary before one could contemplate proletarian revolution, and then chose him — as the most intelligent and promising of the colonial delegates — to present to the congress the supplementary theses on the colonial question.⁵⁶

From this point on, Roy underwent a process of intellectual and moral growth. He was an independent thinker and he possessed the courage of his convictions. He was the undisputed leader of the colonial bloc inside the Comintern, constantly reminding the Western delegates that the East was alive, that it clamored for recognition, and that it was becoming the most important battlefield of the world revolution. But in the course of a few years he acquired the characteristics of a great revolutionary. He learned to place his own person outside and above ideological struggles; he strove for the victory of the ideas he considered correct, but he was above private animosities or intrigues. He supported Stalin against Trotsky out of conviction; then promptly broke with Stalin and found himself expelled from the Comintern and classed as a "social fascist". Unperturbed by any attacks against his own person, Roy continued to write and to speak, criticizing Stalin where he thought him to be wrong, praising him where he considered him to be right. He frequently changed his mind, and frankly denounced and attacked his own outdated ideas.⁵⁷ Roy's concern was with the world; he had transcended East and West. His long search for truth, his uninterrupted studies, research, criticism and self-criticism led him to his own brand of socialism, which he called Radical Humanism. Perhaps his own liferoad, and his passage from nationalism and Bolshevism to an original Humanistic Socialism are indicative of a path which the whole of Asia will follow in the due course of time.

⁵⁵ Told to the author by Mrs. Ruth Fischer.

⁵⁶ Told by Mrs. Fischer.

⁵⁷ M.N. Roy, *The Russian Revolution*.

4. THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL: THE THESES OF LENIN AND ROY ON THE NATIONAL-COLONIAL QUESTION.

As has been indicated above, the world situation seemed to be at a revolutionary climax when the second congress of the Comintern gathered at Moscow. From Warsaw to Persia, the established order was being challenged, and the hope of prompt victory was reflected in the deliberations of the communists.

The representatives of all sections of the Comintern were asked to hand in written reports about the revolutionary situation in their respective countries. Among the reports coming from colonial or under-developed areas, the most interesting and complete was the one presented by Maring (Sneevliet) on the Indonesian situation. Maring pointed out that Dutch colonialism by its very nature had been harmful to the development of Indonesia, the establishment of the large plantations having ruined the independent native farmers, just as the introduction of modern industry had ruined the native artisans. He explained that the colonial exploitation of the East Indies enabled a white workers' aristocracy to rise above the proletariat and to obtain a share in the spoils, with consequent terrible psychological and social results. Then he retraced the development of the Indonesian nationalist groups and socialist party. Maring's report concluded with the promise that by the time of the convocation of the Comintern's third congress, the Social-Democratic Party would have become the Communist Party of Indonesia.⁵⁸

The Chinese socialists reported that a wave of strikes with both national and social content was developing in their country, and that the patriotic student organizations were establishing close tactical unity with the labor unions. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, who at that time was still at Shanghai, was described as being the spiritual head of the national-revolutionary movement.⁵⁹

From Korea arrived an optimistic message reporting revolutionary upheavals and stating that the Korean working masses had finally freed themselves from the tutelage of pseudo-nationalistic, aristocratic intellectuals. The modern-minded middle-class intellectuals were in intimate coalition with the people against the Japanese oppressors, according to the report. The national revolution in Korea would have social implications. Ever since 1919, the report continued, the nationalistic movement was split into two camps, one of which believed in Wilson's program, and had confidence in the Western democracies, and another which looked to Moscow for guidance. The report ended with the opinion that the Moscow tendency was rapidly growing because of the fact that Korea was let down at the Versailles Conference, and also

⁵⁸ *Berichte zum II. Kongress der K. I.*, p. 391-410.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 418-421.

because of the extraordinary cruelty of the Japanese methods of repression.⁶⁰

Armenia, which was still independent and governed by the democratic Dashnak Party, reported the occurrence of pogroms against the Muslim minorities inside the country. Only the Communist Party, continued the report, carried out a policy of real opposition against the "corrupt" and "criminal" Dashnak regime. A revolution against the Dashnaks, and favorable to intimate union with Soviet Russia, was announced. "In Armenia the ruling classes have tied the destiny of the country irrevocably and definitely to the victory of international imperialism. In Armenia there is no national problem, there is only a social problem. The... Communist Party... must be ready in the moment of the general revolt of the East to overthrow the Dashnak Party... and to form, with the rebellious Eastern peoples and in close alliance with Soviet Russia, a common front against international imperialism."⁶¹

The second congress of the Comintern opened in Petrograd on July 19, 1920. After the opening session, the delegates moved on to Moscow, where the real work began on July 23rd. There were fourteen points on the agenda of the congress, with the national and colonial question listed as point Seven.

Even before the national and colonial question was discussed as such, it became obvious that the rapid development of nationalist movements in the East had strongly influenced the participants. When Lenin arose to give his report on "The Present World Situation and the Tasks of the Comintern", it was a far call from the manifesto of the first congress, with its Western viewpoint. Lenin placed the relationship between the Western social revolution and the Eastern national movement in a new perspective by stating that the second congress would be marked by the union of the proletariat with the "colonial slaves".⁶² A united front between communists and Eastern nationalists was in the making. "The imperialist war had drawn the dependent nations into history", by making soldiers out of them and forcing them to fight on European battlefields. "One of our main tasks is to lay the foundations for the organization of the Soviet movement in the non-capitalist countries. *Soviets are possible there as well as in other parts; only they will not be workers' soviets but peasant soviets, or soviets of the toilers.*"⁶³ And somewhat carried away by revolutionary euphoria, Lenin adds: "The beginning of a Soviet movement has already been made in the whole East, in the whole of Asia, among all colonial nations."⁶⁴ Lenin still believed world revolution to be imminent.

After a commission on the national and colonial question, headed

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 422-429.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 431-444.

⁶² II. *Internationaler Kommunistischer Kongress, Protokoll der Verhandlungen*, pp. 37-38.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 38. Our italics.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

by Maring (Sneevliet), had been elected, Lenin proceeded to present his theses on the problem. The theses of Lenin were to be supplemented by M. N. Roy. Lenin had chosen Roy to present the supplementary theses mainly in order to show the importance of the Asians within the Comintern.

Lenin began his introduction to his theses by stating that seventy percent of the world's population inhabit colonial or oppressed countries. His second fundamental thought, he went on to explain, was this: that the colonial oppressors are also the enemies of the Soviet movement, and that the world situation was being determined by the struggle of the imperialists against both workers' soviets and colonial revolts. The third basic thought, Lenin continued, concerned the nature of the nationalist movements in colonial or semi-colonial countries. Should the Comintern support all bourgeois-democratic movements in the oppressed countries? No, Lenin replied, but only those bourgeois-democratic movements, which have a definite revolutionary and anti-imperialist content, should be supported.

"We debated about whether it is correct, theoretically and on principle, to declare that the Communist International and the communist parties are obliged to support the bourgeois-democratic movement in the backward countries. The result of this discussion was a unanimous decision not to speak of bourgeois-democratic movements but only of nationalist-revolutionary movements. There can be no doubt that every nationalist movement can only be a bourgeois-democratic movement, because the great masses of the population of the backward countries consist of peasants, who are the representatives of bourgeois-capitalist conditions. It would be utopian to imagine that proletarian parties, (in so far as it should be possible for such parties to arise in these countries), could be capable of carrying out communist tactics and communist policies in backward countries, without having a definite relationship with the peasant movement and without supporting the peasant movement. But the objection was raised that, if we used the term 'bourgeois-democratic', the difference between reformist and revolutionary movements would be lost..."⁶⁵

This idea of Lenin is quite in accord with his previous writings on national self-determination. On the one hand the fact of a common fight against Western imperialists threw communists and revolutionary nationalists into the same camp and made the Bolshevik principle of proclaiming all nations' right to self-determination a tactical necessity. But while the *right* of self-determination was thus again recognized, the questions of whether a given nationalist movement was *opportune* or not, was left open. Just as the Bolsheviks could recognize the abstract *right* of the Poles to secede from the Russian Empire while agitating through their Polish comrades against such a secession, thus on the international field they could recognize the right of all colonies to

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

independence but in practice support only those movements which were led by anti-imperialist revolutionaries. Certain bourgeois-democratic movements could in practice be counter-revolutionary, Lenin insisted. The imperialists themselves could create bourgeois-reformist movements in their colonies, which would play the same role that right-wing social-democracy played in Europe: to divert the effort of the masses into the domain of struggle for innocuous reforms, without threatening the basic structure of the capitalist-imperialist system.⁶⁶ The practical criterion by which it would be possible to tell whether a bourgeois group was "bourgeois reformist" or "nationalist revolutionary" was defined by Lenin as follows: a group is nationalist revolutionary, and should be supported, only if it grants to the communist party the right to agitate freely among the masses and to organize them.⁶⁷

This statement was extremely radical and well reflects the spirit of the first revolutionary upsurge which characterized the 1917-1920 period. Lenin clearly implied that the communists should make themselves the leaders of the working masses and practice collaboration with the nationalist bourgeoisie for limited objectives, at the same time striving to drive the national revolution onward into the social field.

How should a communist party go about creating a separate mass organization, which would carry out national liberation and then proceed onto the domain of social revolution? Lenin provides the answer by stating that the experience of the Bolsheviks in Turkestan had shown that independent communist action can be based on the peasantry in regions where no proletariat exists.⁶⁸ The form of mass organization which the communist party should always agitate for, not only among proletarians but also among the peasants of backward countries, is the Soviet (Council), "The idea of soviet organization is simple and can be applied not only to proletarian conditions but also to feudal and semi-feudal peasant conditions."⁶⁹

Lenin then explained that within the commission on national and colonial affairs a lively discussion had taken place regarding the significance of soviets in a feudal or pre-capitalist country. Could soviets really be an instrument in the national revolution? And if so, must they be dissolved once the national revolution was over? The basic question was this: would it be possible for the soviets to lead a given backward country through the national into the social revolution, without making it pass through a capitalist phase of development? Could the capitalist phase of development be "skipped"? The commission agreed that this was possible indeed. But certain special conditions would be necessary to enable a country to skip the capitalist phase of development.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139-140.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

"If the victorious revolutionary proletariat organizes a systematic propaganda and if the Soviet governments aid it by all possible means, it would be wrong to suppose that these [backward] populations would have to pass through the capitalist phase. Not only must we constitute autonomous groups and parties in all colonies and backward countries, not only must we propagate peasants' councils (soviets) and seek to adapt the council (soviet) organizations to pre-capitalist conditions, but the Communist International must also declare and explain theoretically that with the help of the proletariat of advanced countries the backward countries can proceed to soviet organization, and that they can arrive at communism by passing through several stages, but avoiding the capitalist stage."⁷⁰

This indicates that Lenin and the other members of the commission still believed in more or less imminent revolution in the West. If revolution broke out in the West, immediate social transformations would be possible in the East, by using the soviet type of organization and leaping over the capitalist stage of development. This also shows itself in the fact that Lenin proposed such difficult conditions for collaboration with the nationalist bourgeoisie. Revolution would break out in the West and the proletariat, i.e., the communist party, could then take over and lead the backward countries on to socialism. The question of what to do if revolution should not break out in the West remained open. What to do if the Eastern countries, lacking support from the Western victorious proletariat, should be forced to pass through the capitalist stage of development? Surely in that case the tactics must be different; the idea of autonomous soviet organization must be abandoned; the rules for collaboration with the nationalist bourgeoisie must be less rigid. This question was raised in the course of the general discussion which followed the reading of the theses.

Lenin's theses themselves constitute a remarkable document in so far as they leave a door open for a retreat from the ultra-revolutionary position of independent soviet action, and of leaping over the capitalist phase. Even though Lenin believed that revolution would conquer in the West and that with the help of a Soviet West the East could proceed straight to socialism, he nevertheless was careful to insist on the need to work with the Eastern bourgeoisie. He essentially provided two alternative tactical programs—one in case of proletarian revolution, and one in case of revolutionary decline in the West. Whether Tukhachevsky overran Warsaw, and made the whole of Western Europe rise up in revolutionary flames, or whether the Red troops were forced to retreat, a program of action for the colonies was ready in either case.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁷¹ In his mention of the possibility, for a colonial country, to pass from feudalism to socialism without going through the capitalist phase, Lenin bases himself on Marx's evaluation of Russia's possibilities in 1882:

"Can the Russian *obtchina*... a form of primitive communal ownership

Lenin's theses, which were handed out in printed form among the delegates, can be summed up as follows:

1. The bourgeoisie proclaims the formal equality of nations but is incapable of giving them a true, concrete, material, economic equality.⁷²
2. Unlike the bourgeoisie, the communists must look at the national situation, and must divorce the interests of the toiling masses from the interests of "the nation as a whole", (which means nothing but "the interests of the ruling class"). The communists must also make a clear distinction between oppressed nations and oppressing nations, "in order to counterbalance the bourgeois-democratic lie..."⁷³
3. The first World War proved to everyone that the bourgeois-democratic phrases of the Western democracies are false and hypocritical. The smaller nations no longer believe in Wilsonian slogans.
4. The cornerstone of communist policy must therefore consist in bringing the proletariat into common action with the toiling masses of all nations, for a united struggle against the feudal landlords and the bourgeoisie, "for this alone guarantees victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible".⁷⁴
5. The dictatorship of the proletariat is on the agenda of history. The Soviet State is gathering all oppressed nationalities around itself for a common struggle.
6. "...It is necessary to pursue a policy that will bring about the closest alliance of all national and colonial liberation movements with Soviet Russia." The form of this alliance is to be determined by the degree of development of the Communist Party or of the national liberation movement in the country in question.⁷⁵
7. "Federation is a transitional form to the complete unity of the toilers of the various nations." National relations within the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic are a small-scale model of this.⁷⁶

of the soil, pass directly into the higher form of communist communal ownership? Or will it have to pass through the same process of disintegration which marks the historical development of the West? The only answer that is possible today is this: If the Russian revolution should be the signal for a proletarian revolution in the West, so that each completes the other, then the present form of Russian communal ownership of the soil can serve as point of departure for a communist development." (Introduction to the Russian edition of the Communist Manifesto, 1882. Cf. *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, p. xiv.)

In thus evaluating the Russian situation, Marx, incidentally, takes position for the Narodniks and against the Russian Marxists of his time. Inasmuch as he tempered his Marxism with a goodly portion of narodnism, Lenin was therefore true to the spirit of Marx.

⁷² Lenin, *Selected Works*, X, 231-232.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

8. The Comintern must work for an ever closer union of all the Soviet federations which might come into being.
9. The Comintern must show that bourgeois-democratic equality is an empty phrase, and that only the Soviet system can produce real equality. It must prove this by rendering direct active aid to "the revolutionary movements in the dependent and subject nations (for example, in Ireland, the Negroes in America, etc.) and in the colonies".⁷⁷
10. Inside each communist party, an extremely energetic struggle must be carried on against all remnants of narrow-minded national prejudice. This becomes more and more important as "the task of transforming the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national one... into an international one... becomes the question of the day".⁷⁸

All these theses are quite general and presuppose an ultra-revolutionary world situation in which the proletariat of Europe would set up Soviet Republics in various countries. Point Eleven of the Theses re-established the balance by providing the answer to the other alternative—that of supporting the bourgeois-nationalist revolution in a backward country, outside the frame of overall world upheaval:

"11. In regard to more backward states or nations in which feudal or patriarchal, or patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind:"

- (1) Communist parties must aid nationalist-revolutionary liberation movements in backward countries. The communist proletariat of "those countries upon which the backward nation is dependent as a colony or financially", must be particularly active in doing so.
- (2) Communists must combat the clergy and other "medieval elements" in the backward countries.
- (3) Communists must combat Pan-Islamism and other movements which fight foreign imperialism for reactionary reasons, i.e., in order to strengthen the feudal lords and clergy.
- (4) Communists must support the peasants inside the backward country in their struggle against the feudal lords, and bring about an alliance between the peasant and the proletarian movement.
- (5) While supporting nationalist-revolutionary movements, the Comintern must not merge with them and must always be ready to fight them as soon as the revolution should pass into a higher phase. Temporary alliances are acceptable, but the communists "must unconditionally preserve the independence of the proletarian movement even in its most rudimentary form".
- (6) Communists should make it clear to the people of the backward countries how deceptive the imperialist talk about creating "independent"

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

states really is, for these states "are absolutely dependent upon them economically, financially and militarily". They should also explain that in view of all this "there is no salvation for dependent and weak nations except in a union of Soviet Republics".⁷⁹

Finally, Point Twelve of the theses warns the communists of advanced industrial countries to be extremely tactful and cautious in approaching the people of oppressed and backward nations. These people have a tendency to regard all members of the ruling nation with distrust and dislike. It will even be necessary, warns Lenin, to lean over backward in making great concessions to these people, "with the view to rapidly removing the aforementioned distrust and the aforementioned prejudices".⁸⁰

It is obvious from this, that Lenin's introductory speech, in which he referred to the need for setting up soviets in backward peasant countries, and to the possibility of leaping over the capitalist phase of development, was made in terms of the immediate tactical situation, while the theses are more general in scope. Clearly enough in the theses Lenin avoids any definite tactical or even strategic commitment; he indicates the possibility of two distinct alternatives. The first alternative is that of speedy revolution in the West. In that case the strategy of the party would aim at the revolutionary transformation of the backward countries into Soviet Republics, and their union with the Russian Soviet Republic. Within that strategic aim, the tactics would include the immediate agitation for divorce of the mass struggle of workers and peasants from the bourgeois-nationalist movement.

The second alternative, to which the theses also provide an answer, was that of the West's failing to go socialist swiftly. The communist strategy in such a case would aim at the national liberation of the colony in question, in as revolutionary and anti-imperialist a manner as possible, so that the new independent state, detached from the Western capitalist bloc, would constitute a new basis for the development of the social revolution. In this case, the tactics would be based on supporting the most radical elements within the nationalist bourgeoisie of the backward nation.

After Lenin had finished his presentation of his theses, Maring, acting as chairman, gave the floor to Roy for the reading of the supplementary theses.

Roy's supplementary theses deal more specifically with the situation in which the West remained capitalist, and in which communist tactics would aim at furthering the national liberation movement, as an inevitable first step, before approaching the question of social revolution. Roy presented his theses in nine points:

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 236-237.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

1. Since the World War, the masses of the backward countries "are indissolubly tied together with the proletarian movements in Europe, as a consequence of the centralization of world capitalism."⁸¹
2. European capitalism keeps itself alive mainly through the exploitation of the colonies. "British imperialism, by enslaving hundreds of millions of inhabitants of Asia and Africa, at the same time succeeds in maintaining the British proletariat under the domination of the bourgeoisie."⁸²
3. The super-profits derived from the colonies keep capitalism alive. The European proletariat can only overthrow the bourgeoisie if the colonial source of profit is stopped up. The colonies also enable the bourgeoisie to grant social advantages to the proletarians inside the ruling land, and thus to develop an anti-socialist workers' aristocracy.
4. Capitalism can only be overthrown by two forces working closely together: National revolution in the colonies and proletarian revolution in Europe.
5. The Comintern is the link between these two forces.
6. Since the colonies do not have a well-developed proletariat, the revolutionary will is, so far, represented mainly by the middle classes. A real proletariat can only arise when a national industry develops, i.e., after the foreign rulers have been expelled. The national revolution must be supported, because, by making the birth of a native proletariat possible, it makes the socialist revolution possible.
7. In all backward countries there are two movements which are growing farther and farther apart: the bourgeois-nationalist movement and "the struggle of the property-less peasants for their liberation from any exploitation."⁸³ The former tries to control the latter, but the Communist International must strive to keep the poor peasants' movement independent. If the Comintern succeeds in thus creating a peasant movement that will be free of the bourgeoisie, it might be possible that "the popular masses in the backward countries will be linked to communism, not through capitalist development but through the development of class consciousness."⁸⁴
8. In a number of colonies there already exist revolutionary parties which are in close touch with the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie. The Comintern must collaborate with such parties.
9. During its initial period, the revolution in the colonies will not be communist but bourgeois-democratic, including a program of agrarian reform, etc. In spite of that, the leadership even of the purely bourgeois-democratic revolution should from the beginning be in the hands

⁸¹ *Il... Kongress...*, p. 145-146.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 148-149.

of the proletariat. As soon as possible the communist parties must found workers' and peasants' soviets in the colonies.⁸⁵

Roy ended by saying that even if a revolution in the colonies should be led by purely bourgeois nationalists, it would still be a positive thing inasmuch as it would constitute a blow against imperialism.⁸⁶ By that statement he offset the dogmatism inherent in the demand for the immediate foundation of soviets, and, like Lenin, left the door open to two alternative tactics.

5. THE DISCUSSION ON THE NATIONAL-COLONIAL QUESTION AT THE SECOND CONGRESS.

A lively discussion began after Lenin and Roy had presented their theses. The discussion reflected a great confusion of ideas regarding the national-colonial question. There was a gap between those who took a purely Western attitude, placing all their faith in the advanced countries and the proletariat, and those who leaned toward the East, looking at the backward countries and the peasantry as a precious and necessary force, without which world revolution would not be possible.

As soon as the applause had died down after Roy's speech, the American John Reed rose, and stated that the theses of Lenin and Roy could be applied perfectly to the situation of the Negroes in the United States. He presented an extremely concise analysis of the race situation in North America, and pointed out that communists are handicapped by the fact, that among colored Americans race consciousness is likely to be stronger than class consciousness. The remedy against this, said Reed, lies in looking at the Negro proletariat not primarily as colored, but primarily as a proletariat, and in working for the speedy creation of mixed white-colored labor unions. In the spirit of Lenin's theses, Reed concluded, communists must use the race struggle of the Negroes, in order to show them that race equality is impossible under capitalism, and that it can only be achieved after the exploitation of man by man has been abolished through a communist revolution.⁸⁷

Another American delegate, Fraina, spoke after Reed. He said that the Negroes were by no means the only people oppressed by United States imperialism. There were, according to Fraina, at least two others: the immigrant workers, and the Latin American nations. Since U. S. imperialism was built on the colonial exploitation of Latin America, Fraina concluded, the Comintern must link the proletarian class struggle in North America to the national emancipation movement in Latin America, and thus form "a gigantic movement, embracing the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 154-157.

whole of the Americas... , in which each national section will subordinate itself to the overall interests of the American revolution".⁸⁸

After the two Americans, Karl Radek took the floor. Radek at this time was undergoing a profound transformation in his views (one of very many transformations, for Radek was a master in the art of changing his mind). From his extreme internationalist position, which had led him to contradict Lenin during the period of exile in Switzerland, Radek had gone to the opposite extreme, as far as his attitude toward nations was concerned. After the revolution had triumphed in Russia, thus becoming embodied in the form of one particular state, Radek had begun to identify communism with the Soviet State, and to think in terms of struggle between countries more than between classes. This attitude led him to analyze capitalist imperialism in terms of state structures, and thus to look upon the strongest capitalist power—England—as the extreme embodiment of the enemy forces, while forgetting about the capitalist, and possibly imperialist, nature of other countries. In his speech about the national and colonial question at the second congress, Radek therefore reduced the matter to a problem of fighting British power, instead of seeing it, in classical communist terms, as an international social affair.⁸⁹

The basic point in communist tactics regarding the national and colonial question, said Radek, was that of the action of the British proletariat. The British proletariat must win the hearts of the Asiatic masses, for its fate, in case of revolution in England, depended on the aid which these masses could give it. Capitalist America would place an embargo on all exports to a revolutionary socialist England, seeking to starve the latter into submission, and England would then depend on Asia for her food supply.⁹⁰ The English comrades therefore should undertake an extremely active agitation campaign in favor of the emancipation, not only of Ireland, but also of India, Egypt, and other colonies. They must make enough noise to demonstrate to the Asiatic masses that the British proletariat was their ally. "As we must try in all countries to win over the petty bourgeois elements to our side, thus must the Communist International become a flaming column which lights the way to the rebellious peoples of Asia and Africa." Unless this is done, the British reactionaries could use colonial troops against workers' uprisings inside England.⁹¹

After Radek's speech, Serrati, the main Italian delegate, proposed, to the annoyance of the representatives of colonial countries, that the list of speakers be closed, and that the colonial comrades be asked to spare their audience the unimportant and uninteresting details.⁹² From

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 157-160.

⁸⁹ Radek's national concept of revolution and counter-revolution later led him to support German nationalism against France. See Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, pp. 201-232, 267-287.

⁹⁰ *II... Kongress*, p. 161.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 165.

Serrati's words and his contemptuous tone it was obvious that he regarded the whole colonial question as little better than a waste of time, highly unimportant in comparison to the great affairs of the noble Europeans. Wijnkoop (Holland) and Maring (Indonesia) protested against Serrati's proposal and stated that all the colonial delegates must be given a fair hearing. Radek supported Wijnkoop and Maring. Wijnkoop, whose feelings toward Serrati were apparently far from affectionate, energetically insisted that the latter's motion be subjected to a vote, to prove that the majority of the congress was favorable to the colonial delegates' freedom of expression. At this point, Rosmer (France), who was acting as chairman, and who shared Serrati's viewpoint, hurriedly adjourned the meeting.

The factions were forming. Serrati and Rosmer were the leaders of the "Western" and "proletarian" host, while Maring, Roy and Wijnkoop represented the "Eastern" and "national-revolutionary" attitude. Radek's position was in a way between the two. He supported the "Easterners" in attaching much importance to the revolution in the colonies, but saw it less as a "battering-ram against imperialism" than as an indirect aid in carrying out the European revolution.

The next day, the session started with three speeches made by Oriental delegates. Sultan Zadeh, a Persian communist leader, unexpectedly made a statement which placed him entirely on the "Western" side. Roy overestimates the importance of the East, Sultan Zadeh said. Revolution must begin in the West and pass from there to the East. Furthermore, it is wrong to support the bourgeois-nationalist movement in countries like Persia. It should be supported only in extremely backward regions, which were barely beginning to emerge from barbarism. To support the bourgeois nationalists in Persia "would mean to drive the masses into the arms of counter-revolution".⁹³ This position obviously constituted a protest on the part of Sultan Zadeh against the Soviets' negotiations with the Teheran Government and against the cessation of active aid to Kutchuk Khan's peasant rebels.

After the Chinese, the Korean and the Turkish delegate had explained at great length that the East was oppressed, but that it would soon arise under the glorious banner of the International,⁹⁴ Serrati's nerves got on edge again, and he once more proposed to shorten the debate. Maring protested, and demanded that all be allowed to speak. A vote was taken, and Serrati's motion was rejected.

Maring then made a speech which was the most thoroughgoing and extreme presentation of the "Eastern" viewpoint. He divided his report into three parts, of which the first concerned the experiences that had been made in the past, the second, the questions of theory raised by these experiences, and the third, the practical possibilities of the future.

⁹³ *II... Kongress*, p. 169-170.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173-188.

Regarding the experience of the past, Maring stated without any reserve that in his estimation the national and colonial question was the most important of all.⁹⁵ He then spoke about the Dutch East Indies in particular, and declared that in that country one of the ideas of Rosa Luxemburg, expounded in *The Accumulation of Capital*, found full confirmation: namely, the idea that capitalist exploitation grows more and more intense as it grows in power, and that its methods become increasingly ruthless. 150,000 Europeans in the Far East oppress a native population of hundreds of millions. For these 150,000 European colonialists, "in day-to-day practice, only what Rudyard Kipling said is true: namely, that East of Suez the ten commandments cease to be valid."⁹⁶ The Sarekat Islam represented, according to Maring, a living nationalist revolutionary force, grown out of the sufferings and hate of the Indonesian peasants and proletarians. The Communist International must by all means collaborate with the Sarekat Islam, which for the moment constituted the most extreme revolutionary force which Indonesia was able to produce.⁹⁷

As far as theoretical matters were concerned, Maring wholeheartedly approved the theses of Lenin and Roy, but placed the accent on Lenin's second tactical alternative — that of collaborating intensively with the revolutionary nationalists. "We would be spoiling half our work if we refused to work with this movement and boasted of our orthodox Marxism."⁹⁸ He agreed that in the colonies the capitalist phase of development could be by-passed, but this could only be achieved precisely by working in harmony with the nationalist movement and by transforming it from within.⁹⁹

In terms of practical possibilities for future action, Maring believed the following measures to be most appropriate: agitation in the native languages of the Eastern peoples; translation of Lenin's and Roy's theses into these languages; establishment of specialized propaganda bureaus for the Far and Middle East; scholarships for Oriental revolutionary leaders to come to study in Moscow. "I demand this because Moscow and Petrograd constitute a new Mecca for the East, and because the capitalist governments will do all they can to prevent our communist hadjis from making their pilgrimage to Moscow and Petrograd."¹⁰⁰

After Zinoviev had called for the closing of the debate, something unexpected happened. Serrati rose to make a declaration.

The Italian delegate's speech was a very concise presentation of the most extremist "Western" and anti-national tendency. He bluntly declared that Lenin's and Roy's theses were highly dangerous and mis-

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 192-193.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

leading. "The definition of 'backward countries' is far too inexact and lacking in precision, not to be misused for all sorts of chauvinist interpretations... National liberation can never be revolutionary unless it is carried out by the working class... The real liberation of oppressed nations can only be carried out by the proletarian revolution and by the Soviet order, and not by a temporary and casual alliance of communist parties with so-called revolutionary bourgeois parties.

"On the contrary, such alliances can only lead to a weakening of proletarian class consciousness, especially in the small number of countries which are used to the fight against capitalism.

"The insufficient clarity of the theses carries in itself the danger of giving weapons to the pseudo-revolutionary chauvinism of Western Europe in its struggle against truly communist international action. Therefore I declare that I shall not vote for the theses."¹⁰¹

Serrati's distrust of anything which might provide a justification to chauvinism was very understandable in terms of the Italian situation, where Mussolini was beginning to organize his Fascist gangs in the name of national revolution. It was a little less understandable that he remained silent throughout the debate and only spoke up when no one had the possibility to answer him anymore.

Serrati's declaration had the effect of a bomb. A raucous rumble of wrathful voices arose. Tense nerves snapped. Slavic, Latin, Jewish, Nordic and Asiatic tempers flared. Wijnkoop, raging, shouted that Serrati had perpetrated an unbelievably dastardly deed, by keeping silent till the end, and then coming out with such statements. Serrati leaped to his feet in flaming anger and explained that Wijnkoop was nothing but a spineless opportunist, who had no right to give lessons to anyone. In a more moderate tone he added that he had always fought nationalism in Italy, and therefore could not possibly support any other kind of nationalism, as he would implicitly do if he voted for the theses.¹⁰² Zinoviev intervened sharply against Serrati, and stated that the latter's attitude was highly "uncomradely".¹⁰³

In extreme excitement and anger, M. N. Roy shouted: "Serrati has called mine and Lenin's theses counter-revolutionary!" "No, no!" Serrati yelled back, embarrassed by Roy's emotion. Without listening, Roy continued and explained that any national revolution in a backward country was at least a small step in the right direction. "All revolutions are just different phases of the overall social revolution." He furthermore qualified Serrati's statement as reactionary and imperialist, and demanded that it be stricken from the protocol.¹⁰⁴ Roy's declaration was followed by a thunderous echo from Wijnkoop, who also demanded

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216-218.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 217-218.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

that Serrati's statement be stricken from the record, and protested because Serrati had supposedly insulted the Dutch Communist Party.¹⁰⁵

In vain, Serrati attempted to explain his point of view in calm and reasonable terms. It had been very far from his intention to insult anyone. Especially Roy had thoroughly misinterpreted the meaning of his words. "Dear Comrade Roy, if I had thought that it was a matter of counter-revolutionary proposals, I certainly would have been frank and honest enough to vote against them."¹⁰⁶ He certainly did not wish to imply that Roy was counter-revolutionary; he only thought that Roy was mistaken in believing that every revolution possessed a social character. Since some national revolutions did not have any social implications whatsoever, Serrati proposed that a simple resolution be drafted, stating that the International sent its fraternal greetings to all oppressed nations, and that it hoped to be able to coordinate national revolts with the communist world revolution. Anything else, Serrati concluded, would constitute a capitulation to a petty bourgeois state of mind.¹⁰⁷

This explanation did not calm the agitated tempers. Serrati had opened a valve through which all the pent-up resentments of the congress delegates came streaming out. While Wijnkoop yelled for the permission to speak against Serrati, in order to "unmask" him, and various other delegates argued heatedly among each other, the chairmen, Zinoviev and Levi, struggled mightily to restore order, to close the debate, and to put the theses to a vote.¹⁰⁸ The motion in favor of closing the debate was adopted against the opposition of Wijnkoop and four others.

Lenin's and Roy's theses were adopted unanimously, minus three abstentions.¹⁰⁹

Thus the Third International had found its general line regarding the national and colonial question. Under the impact of the proletarian revolutionary events in the West on the one hand, and of the unrest in Asia on the other, a general doctrine of support of national revolutions in the East had been born. The great uncertainty of the year 1920 found its expression in the formulation of this doctrine. Would the West turn communist in the near future? In that eventuality the policy of establishing soviets in the underdeveloped countries would be correct. Would capitalism be able to hold out? In that case the Eastern revolution would have to pass through the capitalist phase, and alliances with bourgeois nationalists would constitute the most useful policy. Just as on the practical level the Soviet Government was hesitating between

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

support of Kutchuk Khan's rebels, and an alternative policy of abandoning Kutchuk and concluding an alliance with the official Teheran Government, thus on the theoretical level, Lenin's and Roy's theses indicated the possibility of the two ways. The events in the West would determine the further evolution of Communist policy in the underdeveloped countries of the East.

IV

THE COMINTERN AND THE NATIONAL-COLONIAL QUESTION FROM THE SECOND TO THE FOURTH CONGRESS (1920-1922)

The theses of Lenin and Roy, with their dual alternatives for ultra-revolutionary action or for collaboration with the nationalist bourgeoisie, had been formulated at a moment when the destiny of the West hung in the balance. Almost immediately after the end of the Second Congress, events disproved the theory of those who followed a completely Western inclination, and believed proletarian world revolution to be imminent. The Red Army was forced to withdraw from the outskirts of Warsaw; and the great Western powers, England and France, gave clear indications that any further revolutionary offensive in Europe might bring about mighty reprisals against the Soviet State. The time for a strategic retreat had come. The Bolsheviks had originally tended to consider the establishment of Soviet power in Russia as a purely provisional event destined to give the Western proletarians the necessary stimulation for a socialist revolution. Russia was only to be the provisional guardian of the revolution, until the West should arise in all its might and seize the red flag of communist leadership from the loyal but weak hands of the Russian comrades. But in the autumn of 1920 it already became obvious that Russia would have to hold out alone for a certain time to come. To safeguard the first revolutionary conquests, Russia would have to undergo changes in her internal structure. The revolution would continue, for some time, to be embodied in one particular national form. Therefore the nation concerned would have to be able to exist as a country among other countries, instead of continuing in its heroic but tortured role of international revolutionary standard bearer. Russia had to prepare herself for a New Economic Policy, and at the same time establish normal relations with the capitalist governments which had refused to crumble at the first communist onslaught.

As a corollary to a policy based on finding a *modus vivendi* with the capitalist world, Soviet Russia had to influence the Comintern in a spirit of moderation, as far as the colonial and semi-colonial countries were concerned. If the capitalist world did not flare up in revolutionary flames, Lenin's first alternative—that of establishing soviets in the Eastern countries—could not be applied. The other alternative—that of collaboration with the revolutionary nationalists of the backward areas—would have to be chosen. Instead of founding peasant soviets

in Persia, Turkey, Afghanistan and other countries outside Russia, the Comintern would have to begin a policy of collaboration with the most resolute nationalists of these countries. Instead of unleashing communist revolution in the West, the Comintern was beginning to turn more and more to the task of unleashing nationalist, bourgeois, Jacobine revolutions in the medieval or half-medieval East.

The failure of the first offensive against the advanced capitalist West had the effect of giving the revolution national forms. The complete internationalism of the early Comintern — up to the Second Congress — corresponded to a period of *proletarian* uprisings in the countries of Western Europe, and especially in Germany. The new phase, which began around the end of 1920, and which was one of *nationalist* uprisings in the East, gave to the communist movement itself a national form. The world-wide workers' uprising having failed, and the national democratic revolution becoming more and more the primary concern of the communists, it was natural that the Comintern itself had to lose its completely international character and be reduced more and more to a subservient tool of the state which embodied the communist principle: Soviet Russia.

The Soviet State, which thus ceased to be the Comintern's servant and grew into the undisputed master of world communism, needed peace, in order to heal the ghastly wounds caused by the civil war. The Comintern was influenced, not only by Soviet Russia's need for peace, but also by the fact that the Moscow regime was beginning to grow increasingly authoritarian. The October Revolution bore within itself a basic contradiction — the democratic upsurge of the masses on the one hand, and the necessity of state-directed industrialization and planning on the other. In a more evolved country, with an established industrial economy and a highly educated and skilled people, the contradiction "revolution-centralism" would probably have been solved through the establishment of a strong but democratically controlled socialist government. In Russia, where the people were culturally backward, the task of organization and modernization was left to an *élite*, which *substituted* itself for the masses. This *élite* was honestly convinced — at least at the beginning — that it was democratic in the sense of working *for* the people, even if not *by* the people. But as the need for specialized talent and for emergency measures increased, the gap between the majority of the population and the *élite* grew wider and wider. The popularly elected soviets lost power and the rigidly "vertical" party organs gained in might and scope. This growing-apart between people and party (due to the underdeveloped character of the country and the masses' consequent *incapacity* to conduct public affairs), broke out into open conflict on the occasion of the Kronstadt uprising. The repression of the Kronstadt rebellion meant the triumph of the party over the soviets, of the principle of order over that of revolution, of minority dictatorship over democracy. The victory of the party was inevitable and even necessary, since the party was the *only force capable of ruling the country*. A *democratic* dictatorship of

the proletariat, such as Marx, Engels or Rosa Luxemburg had advocated, was impossible, for the simple reason that there was practically no proletariat to exercise it. The Bolshevik Party became the representative of a working class which did not yet exist. Therefore it gradually degenerated into an oppressive and despotic *caste*.

This tragic degeneration of the Russian revolution, from an explosion of fiercely democratic popular passion to a bureaucratic authoritarianism, was reflected in the International. From 1921 on, centralism and leadership from above began to prevail over the originally spontaneous revolutionary spirit of an organization which had arisen out of the world's most libertarian and idealistic forces.

This process became evident in the Comintern's handling of the national-colonial problem, as well as in other aspects of its activity. The interests of Russia came to dictate the communists' tactics in the colonial countries more than the local conditions in these countries themselves. The increasingly despotic character of the party leaderships rendered real adaptations to the mood of the peoples more and more difficult, if not impossible. And this phenomenon bears great responsibility for the Comintern's failure to achieve definite control over the anti-colonialist movements.

The development toward rigid Russian rule over the International only became completely obvious, in the national-colonial realm, after the fourth congress, but its first symptoms already appeared in 1921.

1. FROM THE SECOND TO THE THIRD WORLD CONGRESS (1920-1921).

Already in the middle of 1920, the old communist policy of supporting ultra-left rebellions in the Eastern countries was slowly yielding to the new tactics of aiding bourgeois nationalist movements directed against the Western colonialist powers.

Following the theses of the second congress, regarding the importance of the Eastern nationalist rebellions in the world revolution, and following up the traditional communist policy of supporting Islam against the Western infidel, the Executive Committee of the Communist International in August 1920 issued a proclamation "to the oppressed masses of Persia, Armenia and Turkey", urging them to send their representatives to Baku for a general meeting of the peoples of the East. Similar convocations were sent to other Asiatic countries. The proclamation was extremely revolutionary in tone, and it constituted a faithful reproduction of the spirit of Lenin's theses of the second congress. But it reflected the ultra-revolutionary alternative—soviet revolution—and was soon to be partly invalidated by more moderate policies.

"Why does the Communist International convoke a Congress of Persian, Turkish and Armenian peasants and workers? What can it give them? What does it expect of them? The fighting workers and

peasants of Europe and America turn to you, who also suffer under the yoke of world capital... because the union of the Persian, Turkish and Armenian peasants and workers with the great army of the European and American proletariat reinforce the front [against the exploiters], and hasten the death of capitalism..."¹ Then follows a violent criticism of the Persian feudal government, which is represented as a tool in the hands of the British for the purpose of exploiting and despoiling the Persian masses. The same for Mesopotamia. "Peasants of Mesopotamia! The English have declared your country to be independent, but 80,000 British soldiers are in your country, plundering and robbing, killing you and raping your women." The Turkish workers and peasants were told that the bourgeois nationalists were not really representing their interests. The part of the Turkish bourgeoisie which fights against the imperialists "does not allow you to take the government of your own country into your hands, to appropriate yourselves the fields which the Sultan has given to the parasites..." As to the Armenians — "As long as there subsists a state of war between you and the Turks, British, French and Armenian capital will be able to keep the Turks in subjection through the threat of an Armenian uprising, and the Armenians through the threat of a Kurdish pogrom." The proclamation continues with similar revolutionary injunctions to the peasants of Syria and Arabia, and ends as follows:

"Peasants and workers of the Near East! If you organize yourselves, if you arm, if you unite with the Red Army of Russian Workers and Peasants, you will be able to... defy the capitalists..., you will have the possibility of taking care of your own interests in a free alliance with the workers' republics of the world... We wish to discuss all these matters with you at the Congress..."² The proclamation was signed by Zinoviev as President, and Radek as Secretary of the Comintern.

Thus the Congress of the Peoples of the East at Baku was placed under the sign of the ultra-revolutionary alternative. The assumption that revolution would break out in the West, and that the East could be sovietized without passing through a capitalist phase of development, was still in force. Only after the Baku Congress, at the end of 1920, was the general line to change, to give up the prospect of immediate revolution in the West and of consequent immediate sovietization of the East, and to turn toward the other alternative: that of gradual nationalist development of the East, passing through a bourgeois and capitalist phase. Precisely because of its ultra-revolutionary tone, the proclamation to the workers of the East shows a "Western" tendency; it assumes that the East will follow in the wake of the West. Only after the end of the Baku Congress, and after the Red Army's retreat from Warsaw did the Comintern begin to turn to the East in a

¹ EKKI — *Aufruf an die Unterdrückten Volksmassen Persiens, Armeniens und der Türkei*, Hamburg, 1920.

² EKKI — *Aufruf an die... und der Türkei*, Hamburg, 1920.

national-revolutionary spirit, proposing collaboration with bourgeois nationalists.

The Congress of the Peoples of the East was an extremely confused affair, in which no real work was achieved beyond rather vague agitational speeches, in which the Soviet representatives urged the Asiatic delegates to look at the example given by the sovietized Tatars, Bashkirs and other Asiatic nationalities within Russia, and to wage a "holy war" against British imperialism. The delegates responded by emitting battle-cries and brandishing swords, daggers and pistols.³

The concrete result of the Baku meetings was the establishment of a Council of Propaganda and Action which was to centralize and guide all nationalist revolutionary movements directed against foreign imperialism and against the ruling classes of the oppressed countries themselves.⁴ This Council remained a very passive institution. Just as the period of War Communism was coming to an end in Russia, the period of ultra-revolutionary offensive was coming to an end in the Comintern.

The new Comintern policy, based on the failure of the immediate proletarian revolution in the West, consisted in supporting all Eastern governments and political movements, which showed a tendency to fight for the complete independence of their country from Western influence. The "revolutionary nationalists" whom Lenin at the second congress had distinguished from the reformist and counter-revolutionary "bourgeois democrats", were henceforth supported by the Comintern even in cases where these self-same nationalists persecuted and suppressed their own country's communist groups. This was quite in accordance with Marxist dialectics—an action hostile to a part may objectively be useful to the whole; a nationalist leader who hangs the communists inside his own country may nevertheless objectively serve as a battering-ram against world imperialism and may, without knowing it, lay the foundations for a later socialist revolution even in his own realm.

In Persia, the Comintern, in accord with its new moderate policy, which took a capitalist phase of development into account, changed its attitude toward the official government in Teheran. On October 22, 1920, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iran declared that Persia was not ripe for the proletarian revolution, and that the bourgeois and capitalist revolution would have to be accomplished first.⁵ Raskolnikov returned to Russia, leaving Kutchuk Khan to his own devices. The Soviet State was throwing the Iranian ultra-revolutionaries to the wolves. On October 25, 1920, the Iranian envoy, Mochaver El Mamalek, arrived in Moscow and immediately began conversations with the Soviet Government regarding a treaty of peace

³ L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. I, pp. 283-284.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

⁵ *Revue du Monde Musulman*, t. 52, 1922, p. 105.

and friendship. This treaty was signed on February 26, 1921. The treaty stipulated the renunciation by Russia of all special privileges, concessions and capitulations which she had obtained during the Tsarist period. Normal diplomatic, cultural and trade relations were to be established between the two countries. A special clause specified that the Red Army would have the right to pass through Persian territory in case of aggression against either of the contracting parties.⁶ On April 25, 1921, Theodore Rothstein arrived in Teheran as Soviet ambassador. On May 30, the last Bolshevik armed forces were evacuated from Persian territory. Kutchuk Khan, abandoned by the Communists, continued to fight a hopeless battle against the regular troops commanded by Reza Khan. By the end of October all rebel activities ceased in the Ghilan region, and in the first days of November the head of Kutchuk Khan was brought to Teheran and displayed on a public square.⁷ On December 15, 1921, the Majlis solemnly ratified the Russo-Iranian pact. Thus the new policy of Russia and of the Comintern, consisting in peaceful collaboration with moderately nationalist movements in underdeveloped countries, was initiated in Persia. By every possible means of persuasion, Russia henceforth attempted to drive the Teheran government to the Left. In so doing, she particularly supported the ambitious Reza Khan, whose ideas were tinged with a very radical form of nationalism.

At the same time the Soviet State, and the International in its wake, undertook a policy of wholehearted support of the Kemalist movement in Turkey. The situation was complicated by the rivalry existing between Kemal Pasha and Enver Pasha. Even though the Soviets and the communists at large sympathized with Kemal from the beginning, Enver could not be ignored. He constantly brought himself to the attention of the communists, and sought to draw their support away from Kemal and onto himself. Thus he attended the Congress of the Peoples of the East at Baku, and loudly offered the Comintern his whole-hearted support in the fight against Western imperialism. To prove the sincerity of his offer, he carried out a drastic self-criticism, apologizing for the narrow-minded attitude which during World War I had led him to support the war effort of the Central Powers.⁸ After Enver's disgrace and exile, when he sought refuge in Moscow and offered his services to the Soviet Government, he presented an embarrassing problem to the communists. The Moscow Government made an attempt to reconcile him with Kemal, but failed completely. While Enver brooded in Moscow, the Soviet Government continued negotiations with Kemal and aided the latter's national liberation campaign in every way. In November 1920, the Foreign Minister of the Turkish nationalist government, Bekir Semi, travelled to Moscow and asked for material

⁶ *Revue du Monde Musulman*, p. 109-16.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁸ R. Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 256-257.

aid in the war against the British and the Greeks. Moscow complied and, according to Karakhan, "helped Kemal with much cannon, money, arms, and military advice".⁹ At the same time the Comintern began a steady propaganda campaign in favor of Kemal's nationalism, which it defined as being a truly revolutionary movement, embodying the will of the Turkish workers, peasants and nascent bourgeoisie, and dedicated to the destruction of imperialism and feudalism. This was the first clear instance of the Comintern's acting like a mere propaganda organ of Russia's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

On March 16, 1921, the Russo-Turkish "treaty of friendship and fraternity" was signed. The preamble of the treaty declared that the two contracting parties shared "the principle of the brotherhood of nations and the right to national self-determination" and that they took note "of their solidarity in the struggle against imperialism".¹⁰ Russia then agreed not to recognize any peace treaty relating to Turkey which should not have the recognition and consent of the National Assembly at Ankara. The frontier between Russia and Turkey was defined anew. Turkey agreed to "cede to Georgia suzerainty over the port and town of Batum... on condition that... the population... shall enjoy a broad measure of local autonomy..." and that "...Turkey shall be accorded free transit for all goods... through the port of Batum".¹¹ In the ideological domain, the treaty stated that "both contracting parties, taking note of the points in common between the movement of the Eastern peoples for national emancipation and the struggle of the workers of Russia for a new social order, solemnly recognize the right of these peoples to freedom and independence and in like manner their right to choose a form of government in accordance with their wishes".¹²

While political harmony between Soviet Russia and Kemalist Turkey was thus established, relations between Kemal and the Comintern left much to be desired. While the Comintern continued in its policy of propagandistic support to Kemal, the latter interpreted article IV of the treaty in his own, very special way. Recognizing that "the movement of the Eastern peoples for national emancipation and the struggle of the workers of Russia for a new social order" had points in common, Kemal nonetheless did not interpret this to mean that the communists should have the freedom to agitate for their own program in Turkey. He made it clear that he had not forgotten the Bolsheviks' non-agitation pledge of 1919.¹³ Immediately after the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish treaty, Kemal organized an artificial Turkish Communist Party, directed by the National Government and charged with the mission of drawing the underprivileged strata of the Turkish population into the national

⁹ L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. I, p. 391.

¹⁰ *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, R.I.I.A., v. I, p. 237.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 238, 239.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 239. Article IV.

¹³ See above, p. 70.

movement. At the same time he undertook extremely severe measures against those communists who continued to follow the Comintern line instead of recognizing the leadership of the nationalists. The Comintern nevertheless decided that Kemal would still have to be supported. Even though he imprisoned communists in his own country, he was still objectively revolutionary. To justify this stand, the Comintern leaders went extremely far in the "Eastern" orientation—which the failure of revolution in the West had made inevitable—and announced that "it would be wrong to conclude that the Communist International has set itself the task of sovietizing the backward countries".¹⁴ The task of the Comintern consists simply in laying the groundwork for the future development of the class struggle in the Eastern regions.¹⁵ In going so far in the policy of peaceful collaboration with the nationalist bourgeoisie, the Comintern seems almost to endorse Kemal's stand. If the social struggle must wait until the laying of the national groundwork is completed, why should the Turkish communists refuse to follow wholeheartedly the leadership of the nationalists? Clearly the International was ready to sacrifice its own men if the interests of the Russian bastion demanded it.

While all these events took place, Enver Pasha, whom the Moscow Government had sent on a mission to Central Asia, in order to remove him from the center of Russo-Turkish affairs, had joined the Turco-Tataric "Basmashi" (partisans) in Turkestan. He dreamed of using the Central Asian Turks for the establishment of a Pan-Turanian empire. After much hard fighting, Enver Pasha was killed by a Red patrol on August 4, 1922.

While establishing a *modus vivendi* with the upper-class nationalists of Persia and Turkey, Soviet Russia and the Comintern did not neglect other Asiatic countries. The Soviet government continued to take a lively interest in Afghanistan and to encourage the anti-British and Pan-Islamist tendencies of Amanullah Khan. Amanullah, following his modernist and revolutionary sympathies, responded eagerly and sent to Moscow, as extraordinary envoy, his uncle, Mohammed Wali Khan. Mohammed Wali and Lenin discussed the possibility of Russia's aiding the Afghans in an eventual war against England. On the basis of such diplomatic talks, accompanied by active ideological intercourse between the Communist Party of Russia and Afghan nationalist groups, a treaty of friendship was signed between the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic and Afghanistan on February 28, 1921. The treaty provided for regular diplomatic relations and free commercial and cultural exchange.¹⁶ Article VII placed the significance of the treaty on a higher, more general level, by declaring: "The High Contracting Parties agree upon the freedom of Eastern nations on the basis

¹⁴ Safarov, "Le mouvement révolutionnaire en Orient et le communisme", *Correspondance Internationale*, No. 7, November 2, 1921.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, v. 1, p. 233-234.

of independence and in conformity with the general wish of the people of each nation.”¹⁷ In the autumn of 1921 the Soviet Government sent the Turkish general Dzhemal Pasha, who, like Enver, had been forced to seek refuge in Russia, to Kabul, to aid Amanullah’s nationalists in drafting a modern constitution. Dzhemal subsequently became Enver’s rival in seeking to establish a Pan-Turanian empire, and for a number of months was at the hand of Basmashi bands, fighting the Soviets.¹⁸

During the same period, the Soviet Government and the Comintern turned their attention to a country which until then had been almost completely outside the scope of international revolutionary activity: China.

An early as 1908, Lenin, with his unusually fine intuition of political tendencies in the East, had come to the conclusion that “in China, the revolutionary movement against medievalism has... made itself felt...”¹⁹ and that “the transformation of the old Chinese riots into a conscious democratic movement is inevitable”.²⁰ In 1912, when the Chinese Revolution was in its initial stages, Lenin perceived the importance of Sun Yat-sen as a revolutionary leader, and promptly drew a comparison between the followers of Sun and the Russian Narodniks. “The progressive Chinese democrat talks exactly like a Russian. His similarity to the Russian Narodnik is so great that his fundamental ideas and a number of his expressions are completely identical with the latter’s.”²¹ And while criticizing the populist views of Sun Yat-sen, and stating that the latter’s desire to follow a purely Chinese way of development, different from the pattern of the West, was quite utopian, Lenin paid homage to the greatness of the Chinese revolutionary and of his disciples:

“A militant, sincere spirit of democracy pervades every line of Sun Yat-sen’s platform. It reveals a thorough appreciation of the inadequacy of a ‘racial’ revolution. It does not betray a trace of the non-political spirit, or of indifference toward political liberty, or any admission of the idea that Chinese autocracy is compatible with Chinese ‘social reform’, with Chinese constitutional reforms, etc. It is the expression of complete democracy and the demand for a republic. It directly presents the question of the conditions of the masses, of the mass struggle; it expresses warm sympathy for the toilers and the exploited, belief in the justice of their cause and in their strength.

“What we have before us is a really great ideology of a really great people, which is able not only to bemoan its age-long slavery, not only to dream of liberty and equality, but is able also to *fight* the age-long oppressors of China.”²²

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

¹⁸ L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. I, p. 385; R. Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 257-258.

¹⁹ Lenin, *Selected Works*, v. IV, p. 300.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 306.

And Lenin interpreted the meaning of the Chinese revolutionary outburst as follows: "It means that the East has finally struck the path of the West, that new *hundreds and hundreds of millions of people* will henceforth take part in the struggle for the ideals which the West has worked out. The Western bourgeoisie has decayed... but in Asia there *still* exists a bourgeoisie capable of representing sincere, militant, consistent democracy, a worthy companion of the great preachers and great public men of the end of the eighteenth century in France."²³ According to Lenin, the main carrier of the bourgeois class mission in China is the peasant. At the same time a proletariat is developing in Shanghai and other cities. "It will probably form some sort of Chinese Social-Democratic Labor Party, which, while criticizing the petty-bourgeois utopians and reactionary views of Sun Yat-sen, will certainly take care to single out, defend and develop the revolutionary-democratic core of his political and agrarian program."²⁴ And a few months later (November 1912), Lenin added: "Chinese freedom has been won by the alliance of peasant democracy with the liberal bourgeoisie. The near future will show whether the peasants, without the leadership of a proletarian party, will succeed in holding their democratic position *against* the liberals, who are only waiting for the opportune moment to desert to the Right."²⁵

In spite of this early interest shown by Lenin in the Chinese revolution, the Comintern and the Soviet State did not take the initiative in opening relations with Sun Yat-sen. It was only after the latter had sent his greeting to the Soviet Government that Chicherin wrote Dr. Sun on August 1, 1918:

"When you sent greetings to the workers' and peasants' Government of Russia, you, honored teacher, pointed out that the Russian and Chinese revolutions have common aims, that they are leading to the liberation of the peoples and to the establishment of enduring peace, based on the recognition of the community of interests of the two great proletariats, the Russian and the Chinese." And: "The Russian working classes turn to their Chinese brothers and call them on to the common fight."²⁶ On July 25, 1919, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs wrote to the Governments of both North and South China, announcing that Russia renounced all special privileges and concessions obtained under the Tsarist regime and proposed the establishment of normal diplomatic relations.²⁷ In this instance, Soviet diplomacy and the Comintern undertook two different tasks. While the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs established relations with both Northern and Southern China, the International was only interested in the latter, and stood ready to incite and support Canton against Peking.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 307.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

²⁶ *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, v. I, p. 93.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-161 and *Soviet Russia*, v. II, No. 23, June 5, 1920, p. 568-9.

In December 1920, at the beginning of the phase of Comintern collaboration with bourgeois nationalists, the question of the foundation of a Chinese Communist Party was discussed in the International. Several communist groups being already in existence in South China, the next step was deemed to be the consolidation of these isolated groups in the framework of a single, unified Communist Party.²⁸

After the second congress, then, it became obvious that the Comintern had to resort to more supple methods in dealing with the Eastern countries. Since the task of the Comintern henceforth consisted in awakening and directing revolutionary nationalism, the communist leaders had to accustom themselves to the idea of making concessions to certain nationalists, and of looking at each country in a different way. If the West had gone through its proletarian revolution after the first World War, the Comintern program would have been simple and general, embracing the whole world. Since proletarian revolution failed, however, the Comintern was forced to work in a great number of separate national frameworks instead of a single world-wide field of action. Ever since 1921, this relapse from a world-wide field of action into separate national fields had the effect of sharpening an inner contradiction inherent in the structure of the Comintern. The centralized, "monolithic" character of the International's organization corresponded perfectly to the original "Western" idea which presided over the foundation of that body. The revolution was thought to be world-wide, and a universal centralized organization seemed best fitted of direct it. As soon as facts began to prove the "Eastern", national tendency true, however, the centralized character of the Comintern became a source of weakness. The organization became clumsy, unwieldy, too top-heavy to be able to adjust on time to all the small and delicate changes which took place in each one of the separate national fields of action. This difficulty became particularly evident in the case of the underdeveloped and colonial countries, for which the Executive Committee in Moscow possessed inadequate sources of information. This contradiction between an increasing centralization of the Comintern on the one hand, and an increasing diversification of the national fields of action on the other, became more and more pronounced. Facts began to move more swiftly than theory; Comintern decisions and directives began to lag behind the actual evolution of events. This tendency, resulting from the contradiction between monolithism and diversity of tactics, was to cause disastrous results later on, after the fourth congress. On the other hand, the centralized organization was, of course, a splendid asset in the ever more frequent cases in which the International acted as an organ of Russian policy.

At the beginning of 1921, the tendency for Comintern theory to lag behind the requirements of practice could already be seen in certain cases. At least in theory, the Executive Committee of the Comintern

²⁸ Vilensky (Sibiriakov), "Am Vorabend der Entstehung der K.P. in China", *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, 1920-1921, pp. 133-4.

took cognizance of this danger and warned against it. At the session of the E.C.C.I. which took place in January 1921, Sokolnikov warned against tactical generalizations, as far as the countries of the East were concerned. Each country, he said, was a unit in itself, and offered different possibilities. Thus India was relatively advanced socially and industrially, so that the national revolution might well take place under the leadership of the proletariat. On the other hand, Persia and Afghanistan were agricultural, with the peasants forming the oppressed class, so that the national-democratic revolution in these countries required a different sort of group alliances than in India.²⁹

2. THE THIRD WORLD CONGRESS.

The third world congress of the Communist International, which met in Moscow on June 22, 1921, took cognizance of the fact that a new situation had arisen through the failure of immediate revolution in the West. It defined the new phase as one of *temporary stabilization of capitalism*, in the course of which the Comintern would be obliged to follow defensive, rather than offensive, tactics.³⁰ As far as the West-East question was concerned, however, the position of the participants in the third congress was far from clear. Even though the revolutionary situation looked negative in the West, they did not come to the conclusion that the East might offer more promising possibilities. On the contrary, the Eastern question was treated with a negligence which clearly indicated that even though in fact the line of communist offensive action was switching more and more toward the East, the representatives of the major countries still refused to face that fact, and to modify their theoretical outlook accordingly. In the same way as in 1919 and 1920, most of the delegates were still hypnotized by the West, and especially by Germany, which continued to show signs of turmoil. The Oriental question (meaning the national and colonial problem) was classed under number Nine on the agenda of the congress. In a letter sent by the E.C.C.I. to all member and prospective member parties, the importance of this point was defined as follows:

“Point Nine treats an important question. The Communist International has achieved its first successes among the peoples of the East. The Congress of the Peoples of the East at Baku undoubtedly had a great historical significance. In the same way the Congress of the Peoples of the Far East, which is now being prepared, will play an important role. The Third Congress will be forced to approach the Eastern question not only theoretically, as was the case at the time of the Second Congress, but also practically. *Without a revolution in Asia the proletarian world revolution cannot be victorious.*”³¹ This thought

²⁹ “Die Tätigkeit des E.K.K.I., 1921”. *Die Kommunistische Internationale*, 1921-22, p. 438-9.

³⁰ *Protokoll des III. Kongresses der K.I.*, p. 48-90.

³¹ Our italics.

must become part of the spiritual heritage of the communist proletarians. Only then will the communist workers be spiritually armed to a sufficient degree to fight the European opportunism of Mr. Hilferding and other heroes of the Second-and-a-half International, who only have a contemptuous smile for the oppressed peoples of the East.”³²

Even though this convocation showed a strongly “Eastern” spirit, the majority of delegates at the Congress did not. The text of the convocation indicates the new line—that revolution will be impossible in the West unless it breaks out in the East. Instead of the Western tendency which showed itself fully at the First Congress and partly at the Second Congress, and which claimed that the proletariat of the West would revolutionize the East, the E.C.C.I. now stated the opposite: the nationalists of the East would revolutionize the West!

Many delegates disagreed with such an analysis, even though the representatives of the Eastern viewpoint employed very logical arguments. Thus M. N. Roy, during the discussion about Trotsky’s report on “The World Crisis and the New Tasks of the Comintern”³³ exposed the role of the Eastern underdeveloped world in the general framework of historical development as follows:

The World War had left two great powers in a position of domination in the world: England and America. The world has been divided among them: the United States rule over the Western, and England over the Eastern hemisphere. English capitalism is kept alive by a new economic policy in regard to the colonial countries. Before the First World War, England used her colonies as a market for finished goods, and tried to prevent their industrialization. Since the end of the World War, however, faced with the danger of a depression, England on the contrary seeks to industrialize her colonies, so as to create new markets for her primary goods (machinery, etc.). Thus, according to Roy, the colonies constitute a potential means for the stabilization of the tottering capitalist system. Since the colonies are, thus, the essential reserve of capitalism, it becomes the most important matter of all, to deprive capitalism of such a reserve, and to transform the colonies, on the contrary, into a reserve of the socialist revolution.³⁴

Trotsky took cognizance of Roy’s arguments concerning the importance of the colonies, but he did not go as far as to attribute the very first place to the colonial question. For Trotsky, “the revolution flows along three river-beds, and Comrade Roy has reminded us of one of these river-beds. The first great river-bed of revolutionary development is the rotten Europe... the second: the feverish development of America... The third: the colonies. During the war... they developed strongly in a capitalist direction... For the revolutionary development in Japan, China and India, the development of capitalism plays a

³² *Protokoll des III. Kongresses*, p. 8-9.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-91.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 121-123.

decisive role... The proletariat will play a role there, out of any proportion to the degree of development of capitalism, or to the number of workers. For the peasantry of India or China has no other possibility, no other point of concentration, then the young militant proletariat".³⁵ Thus Trotsky assigned the underdeveloped countries a far more important place in his general world view than he had done two years earlier, when his tendency had been completely Western. Nevertheless, it remains noteworthy that his basic idea remained Western — for he thought of the East in terms of proletarian and not national revolution.

Zinoviev, as chairman of the Comintern, then presented his report about the activity of the E.C.C.I.³⁶ He spoke mainly about Western problems, indicating only that in the Eastern countries much remained to be done in the way of organization. That idea was strongly endorsed by Djavad Zadek of Iran, who rose to remark that unless the Comintern promptly began an energetic organization campaign in the East, the political situation there might become extremely confused. Both in Iran and in Turkey, the nationalist leaders, not content with receiving the aid and support of the Comintern, were seeking to turn the communist movement into their own tool by founding so-called Communist Parties of their own. These parties served purely national ends and had no connection with the Comintern. Thus in Iran there were two "Communist Parties" in existence and in Turkey three.³⁷

After these preliminary speeches which touched the national and colonial problem, began the discussion of the Eastern question proper. It was extremely disappointing, inasmuch as most of the delegates who spoke had nothing to contribute except very vague generalities. The discussion indicated that even though the Comintern as a whole had taken a step toward greater awareness of the importance of the East, the individual delegates were still unable to analyze this aspect of their activity in a practical and dynamic way. The European delegates still had their eyes turned mainly toward the West, and the Asians, on the other hand, spent a great deal of time talking rather meaninglessly.

Suleiman Nury, the representative of the Turkish Communist Party (Comintern section) rose above the level of most of the other speeches, by stating with great clarity what the future relationship between the communists and the nationalists should be in his country. He explained that Kemal's government "sought to suppress any communist movement" but that in spite of this the extreme Left should continue to support Turkish revolutionary nationalism.³⁸ "The Anatolian workers and peasants, as well as we communists, are conscious of the fact that they must support the national independence movement as long as it goes on, since the destruction of the Entente and of the imperialists constitutes the basis for the world revolution which will destroy all forms of

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 144-200.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 999.

slavery." As soon as the Kemalist movement gives up its revolutionary attitude, however, and begins to make concession to the foreign powers, the communists would have to lead the workers and peasants into battle against it.³⁹

After a few other Eastern delegates had spoken, contributing nothing new, Zinoviev introduced a guest speaker, Makhul Bey, fraternal delegate from the Committee of Revolutionary Muslims. The Revolutionary Muslims were an organization of nationalists from various Islamic countries, who sought to lead the different liberation movements into a common strategic path, and who entertained friendly relations with the Comintern. Makhul Bey painted a glowing picture of the revolutionary dynamism of the Muslims. He pointed to the fact that positive developments were taking place in Turkey, in Morocco (where a revolutionary committee tried to start an insurrection), in Tripoli (where the rebels were said to have killed 35,000 Italians, and to have seized 70,000 rifles), in Egypt (where occasional terrorism occurred), in Albania, Persia, India, and Java. The speaker furthermore mentioned the Emir Ibn Sa'ud of Arabia and the Iman Yahya of Yemen as outstanding anti-imperialist fighters.⁴⁰

After a number of other delegates had taken the floor to explain at great length that their peoples were very revolutionary and that they loved the Comintern, the presidium proposed to reduce the time allowance to five minutes for each speaker. This proposal was accepted. Western indifference and Eastern flowery eloquence had combined to reduce the discussion on the Oriental question to a sort of necessary evil, to be gotten over with as quickly as possible.⁴¹

One man, the most active of the Asiatic delegates, Manabendra Nath Roy, rose to protest violently against this attitude.

"I have been given five minutes for my report. Since it deals with a topic which cannot be exhausted even in an hour, I simply wish to use these five minutes for an energetic protest.

"The way in which the Oriental question has been treated at this Congress is purely opportunistic, and more befitting a Congress of the Second International."⁴² Roy went on to say that a meeting of the commission on the Eastern question had taken place the day before, which not a single member of the European or American delegations had condescended to attend. He proposed that a new commission be appointed, to treat the Eastern question with the necessary seriousness.

A few short speeches followed. The Korean delegate maintained that only the workers and peasants, but not the bourgeoisie, would be able to liberate Korea from the Japanese.⁴³ The Japanese delegate,

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1004-1011.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1016.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 1018.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 1023. A Korean Communist Party had been founded in exile, in Irkutsk, in May 1921.

Taro Yoshikara, addressed a significant warning to the Congress. Japanese imperialism, he said, poses as a revolutionary force in Asia and seeks to use revolutionary nationalism as a weapon against the rival imperialisms. Certain peoples, especially the Indians, allow themselves to be misled by such Japanese propaganda, and the Comintern must therefore undertake all possible measures to counteract such moves.⁴⁴

Julien, one of the French delegates, strongly supported Roy's protest. The East was full of tremendous revolutionary possibilities, he thought. Very reasonably, he stated that in a period of capitalist stabilization, where the proletarian revolution in Europe was in regression, "the national questions inevitably move into the foreground".⁴⁵ The Western delegates, he added, seemed not to understand this simple fact, and their way of treating this important matter reminded him of a cinema performance.⁴⁶ This last statement produced a sharp rebuke from Julien's Western-minded colleague Colliard, who said that he wished to protest against Julien's protest, and that it was an impertinence to compare such a dignified gathering as a Comintern Congress with a movie audience.⁴⁷ The Bulgarian Kolarov, who was serving as chairman of the session, joined in the reproaches against Julien, and expressed the opinion that the whole discussion should simply serve the purpose of expressing the solidarity of the Western communists with the Eastern peoples.⁴⁸

It was then decided to wait with the publication of a manifesto concerning the Eastern question until a commission appointed by the E.C.C.I. should have studied the matter in more detail. The South African delegation suggested to include a resolution on the Negro question in the agenda of this commission. The Congress agreed to this, as well as to the inclusion of a manifesto on the Jewish problem.⁴⁹

Thus the third congress adjourned without taking any definite stand whatsoever on the national and colonial problem. The general theses of the second congress remained for the time being the sole guiding line for the communist parties of the underdeveloped countries. Although the whole emphasis of Comintern action was slowly but surely moving from the West to the East, the third congress had not taken official cognizance of the fact. Only in its theses regarding the overall world situation and the tasks of the Comintern did the congress state that "the toiling masses of the colonial and semi-colonial countries... have been drawn into political life... British India stands at the head of these countries and the revolution grows in direct proportion to the development of the industrial and railway proletariat on the one hand, and the increase in the brutality of the British on the other."⁵⁰

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1027.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1033.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1030.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1035.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1036-37.

⁵⁰ *Thesen und Resolutionen des III. Kongresses der K.I.*, p. 95.

3. FROM THE THIRD TO THE FOURTH CONGRESS (1921-1922): SOVIET POLICY.

During the period which lies between the Third and the Fourth Congresses of the Communist International, the Eastward development in the general tendency of the Comintern continued, and became gradually recognized by an increasing number of communists. Nevertheless certain "Western" elements continued to oppose the idea of collaboration with nationalism. Powerful factors continued to maintain the principal attention of the Comintern focussed on the countries of the West. But it became more and more obvious that happenings in Asia, Africa and South America were closely related to events in Europe and North America.

In the course of the year 1921-1922, the process which the Third Congress had characterized as "stabilization of capitalism" continued. More and more, the revolution seemed to be on the defensive. Reduced to its national bastion, the Soviet State, communism became increasingly identified with that bastion. The Soviet State thus continued to gain an ever greater ascendancy over the International. At the same time as the revolution became embodied in one particular leader country, the peripheral action of communism also continued to express itself in national forms.

The development in the direction of greater emphasis on the nation, and on Eastern nationalism, as vehicles of revolution, between the Third and the Fourth Congress, can be studied under two aspects: first, the major events in the relationship between the Soviet State and the Eastern countries; and second, the activity of the Comintern in regard to Eastern nationalisms.

Soviet Russia continued her policy of establishing relations based on friendly collaboration with the governments of the East, and especially with those which had a nationalist character and sought to combat the colonizing influence of Western powers.

Relations between Russia and Turkey remained good, but eventually began to cool. By the summer of 1922 Kemal had succeeded in taking Constantinople and expelling the last Greek troops from Turkish territory. The military part of the national program was accomplished. The next step was to seek to consolidate the gains made on the battlefield. The great powers agreed to a general conference on the Near Eastern question, to be held at Lausanne, and after some hesitation Russia was invited to participate. The Soviet attitude at Lausanne was simple: supporting Turkish nationalist claims to the most extreme extent, and even going farther than the Turks themselves. The Russian thesis, corresponding to Russia's own defensive interests, held that the Ankara Government should exercise its sovereignty over the Straits, which should be closed to all military vessels.

In advocating complete and exclusive Turkish sovereignty over the Straits, Russia actually went farther than the Turks themselves. Russia was pursuing a double end: first, to close the Black Sea to all vessels of war which might threaten her safety, and second, to seek to drive the Turkish nationalists leftward into a more extreme position of anti-imperialist intransigence. At the same time the Comintern continued its spirited defense of Kemalism as a powerful and pure revolutionary trend. Notwithstanding the fact that Kemal continued to suppress the Turkish section of the International, resolutions and proclamations in favor of Kemal were constantly being issued by the E.C.C.I. The Comintern press wrote enthusiastically about Turkey and described the Ankara National Assembly as an example of the purest revolutionary democracy, "a Republic without a President, in which both legislative and executive power belong to the parliament."⁵¹

In Persia, Russia continued the policy of supporting the upperclass nationalists rather than the extremist rebels, which even after the death of Kutchuk Khan still continued to infest certain regions of the country. The principal figure which the Bolsheviks supported from 1921 on was Reza Khan. After having defeated Kutchuk's extremists, Reza, far from returning to the pro-British fold, reorganized the national army of Persia and dismissed all British military instructors. He also disarmed the South Persian Rifles, which were commanded by British officers. In the course of the year 1922, it looked as though Reza Khan would truly be the Kemal of Persia. Rebellious, fiery, ruthless, he seemed the embodiment of Persian nationalism and anti-imperialism. In the course of the year 1922, various tribal uprisings occurred against Reza Khan, with which, one may reasonably suppose, British secret agents were not wholly unconnected. The Comintern supported Reza Khan on the propagandist level.

Soviet and Comintern relations with the nationalist Afghanistan of Amanullah also continued on a good basis. In the early part of 1922 these good relations were temporarily troubled by the fact that the Afghans looked at Enver Pasha and his Pan-Turanians with a good deal of sympathy, but as soon as Enver disappeared, all was well again. Afghan sympathies for Russia and for the Comintern were immensely stimulated by the fact that British troops were constantly climbing up and down the mountains of Waziristan, chasing rebellious tribesmen and constituting a nuisance in the eyes of the local population.⁵²

In the meantime, Soviet power had been extended to Outer Mongolia. In the course of 1921, that country had been taken over by a psychopathic adventurer, Baron Ungern-Sternberg, who tried to become a second Gengis Khan, leading the Mongols against the democratic or socialist West, to re-establish throughout the world the principle of absolute monarchy. In July 1921, Budenny's Red Cossacks invaded

⁵¹ Astakhov, "En Turquie Nouvelle", *Correspondance Internationale*, August 30, 1922.

⁵² L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. I, p. 433-34.

Mongolia and captured its capital, Urga. By the end of August 1921, Ungern-Sternberg had been decisively defeated. Made prisoner, he was tried and shot at Novo Nikolaievsk.⁵³ Side by side with the traditional yaks' tails, the red flag of the Soviets floated over the Mongolian tent towns. Under the guidance of Russian advisors, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party took power and proceeded to reorganize the country. In view of the extreme backwardness of social conditions in Mongolia, the revolutionary government's action was limited to the levying of heavy taxes on the Lamaist clergy, and to educational work among the tribes.

As to China, the attitude of the Bolsheviks remained the same in 1922 as it had been in 1921. The Comintern gave moral support to Sun Yat-sen and to his Canton Government, representing him as the leader of Chinese revolutionary nationalism. At the same time, the Soviet Government was careful not to break all bonds with the other side, and continued to entertain relations with Peking as well as with Canton.

4. THE "TOILERS OF THE FAR EAST".

The action of the Comintern was thus falling into a steady pattern of cooperation with Eastern nationalists. While helping individual countries to develop in the direction of greater independence, the International also tried to coordinate the actions of different national movements on a regional basis. This had already been attempted for the Near Eastern region at the Baku Congress of 1920. In 1922 the E.C.C.I. convoked a Congress of Toilers of the Far East to constitute the Far Eastern counterpart to the Baku Council.

The Congress of the Toilers of the Far East took place in Moscow, from January 21 to February 1, 1922. The proceedings of the Congress were similar to those of the Baku Congress, in that they were extremely vague. The keynote was sounded by Zinoviev in his opening speech. He spoke of the Washington Conference, which had failed to bring any real agreement on disarmament. He defined the Washington Conference as a "quadruple alliance of bloodsuckers",⁵⁴ held for the sole purpose of dividing Asia among the colonialist powers. Zinoviev voiced the hope that those followers of Sun Yat-sen who had hopefully looked to American democracy for aid against European colonialism, had their eyes opened by the Washington Conference and understood finally that the Americans were "imperialist robbers" as shameless as the English, French and Japanese.⁵⁵ He also warned the Sun Yat-senists to give up any imperialist design that they themselves might have on Mongolia. Mongolia must be independent, and the Chinese revolutionaries would

⁵³ *Ibid.*, v. I, 536-7, and E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution (A History of Soviet Russia)*, v. III, p. 514.

⁵⁴ *The First Congress of the Toilers of the Far East*, p. 34.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

act against their own interest if they tried to annex her to China. For "a people trying ever so little to oppress [another] cannot itself be free".⁵⁶ While China, Korea and Mongolia were colonies and semi-colonies, nationally oppressed, Japan represented the other side of the picture. And Zinoviev drew a picture of Japanese internal affairs, spoke about the misery of the Japanese proletariat and predicted a socialist revolution. The four "bloodsuckers" would clash sooner or later in an "inevitable grandiose war in the Pacific Ocean",⁵⁷ and that would set off the revolution inside Japan. Under the leadership of the Japanese proletariat, the oppressed nations of the Far East would then shake off their chains and enter a stage of free and democratic development, with the material and spiritual aid of Soviet Russia and Soviet Japan.⁵⁸

It is interesting to note that even at this Congress, where the representatives of underdeveloped countries were in the majority, Zinoviev spoke in a somewhat "Western" spirit. He was abandoning the idea that revolution in the West must necessarily precede the same event in the East, but he had not yet recognized that a national liberation war might be successful even *before* a *proletarian* revolution took place. For Zinoviev, proletarian revolution still had to precede national-democratic revolutions. "Western" Japan would have to undergo its proletarian upheaval, before "Eastern" China or Korea could have theirs. Zinoviev insisted on that point: As Marx once said that revolution was impossible in Europe if it did not start in England; so revolution was impossible in East Asia if it did not start in Japan.

A few more years would have to elapse before the Comintern completely and officially recognized what was already implicit in some of its tactics: that the national-democratic revolution of an underdeveloped country was likely to precede the proletarian transformation of the advanced regions, rather than the other way around.

The first part of the Congress came to a close with another startling speech by Zinoviev. The chairman of the Comintern was at this time representing an extremely left-wing tendency within the Russian Communist Party and the Comintern. The struggle between the Western-minded left wing and the Eastern-minded right wing, later to be crystallized in the Trotsky-Stalin struggle, was beginning to develop inside the Communist International. And thus Zinoviev's repeated insistence, at the Far Eastern Congress, on the primacy of the proletarian revolution, was an indication of his general adherence to the Left. His concluding remarks were astonishing:

"We think that your countries [China, Korea, Mongolia] also are ripe for the soviet system. We think that the real revolutionaries in China and Korea must even now raise the slogan of 'Soviets'... [You must

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32. Also, Russia may have intended Mongolia to belong to her own zone of influence.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35-36.

declare yourselves in favor of] the soviet system, even in such places where these soviets will be pre-eminently peasant soviets.”⁵⁹ And he stated once more, very emphatically, that the victory of the Japanese proletariat was the key to the entire Asian revolution.⁶⁰

Safarov, who after Zinoviev presented a report on “The National-Colonial Question and the Communist Attitude Thereto”, spoke in an entirely different spirit. Contrary to Zinoviev, he represented the spirit of the Eastern-minded right wing. But the struggle between the Right and the Left was as yet only in a state of gestation; and besides the Eastern delegates were in their majority unable to distinguish the shades of difference between Zinoviev’s and Safarov’s approach. They applauded both speakers with equal vigor and declared themselves to be in thorough agreement with both.

Safarov declared that for China the first objective must be national and democratic liberation from imperialist rule. In this task all Chinese democrats must unite in a single bloc, and must rely mainly on the force of the peasant masses.⁶¹ The communists must support all bourgeois democrats, under the sole condition that the latter allow them full freedom of action. In Korea, as in China, a united national front against imperialism must be formed, within which the communists must loyally collaborate with the democratic bourgeoisie. At the same time the communists must also, however, be ready to criticize any indication of a spirit of appeasement or compromise on the part of the bourgeois leaders.⁶² In Japan, Safarov continued, the situation was different because it was a more advanced country, in which the bourgeoisie had already passed over to the counter-revolutionary side. But even Japan was not ready for an immediate proletarian upheaval. Even in industrially advanced Japan the proletariat must first make an alliance with the peasants and lower middle class in order to wipe out the remnants of feudalism and to complete the national democratic revolution. And only after that had been done, would the basis have been laid for an entirely independent class action of the industrial workers. The immediate demands must be: “‘A democratic republic, land nationalization, the nationalization of large industry with workers’ control of production’”; in other words, a radical-democratic rather than completely socialist program.⁶³ In what may have been a jab at Zinoviev, Safarov explained that only anarchists are afraid of the slogan of democracy. Anarchists think that the slogan of democracy will divert the attention of the workers from the ultimate socialist objective. That is not so, Safarov stated.⁶⁴ And he concluded by remarking that the relationship between

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 166-168.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

national-democratic and proletarian revolution must be studied with much more attention than had been devoted to it in the past.⁶⁵

The subsequent discussion showed that even though the contradiction between Zinoviev's Western and Safarov's Eastern view did not break out into the open, almost all Eastern delegates implicitly agreed with Safarov. Against Zinoviev's extremist demand for the immediate establishment of soviets, most participants in the Congress, both communists and non-communists, favored the method of proceeding by stages, and of working in close union with bourgeois democrats during the initial period. Support of Safarov was expressed in its most extreme form by Tao, the Kuomintang delegate. Tao absolutely rejected the thesis that a Japanese proletarian revolution was a necessary prelude to Chinese national liberation. Not Japan but the Kuomintang will play the decisive role in freeing Asia, he insisted.⁶⁶ Then, however, he went a little too far even for Safarov's taste, by pretending that the Kuomintang's program and that of the Comintern were identical, and that the Kuomintang's national council was the same thing as a soviet.⁶⁷ Safarov corrected Tao and insisted that even though the Comintern must ally itself with national revolutionary parties such as the Kuomintang, it must never lose sight of the fact that the latter is not communist but bourgeois democratic. "We say: in colonial and semi-colonial countries, the first phase of the revolutionary movement must inevitably be a national-democratic movement. We give our support to this movement, as such, to the extent that it is directed against imperialism. We are supporting it, have always supported it, and will do so in the future, but, on the other hand, we cannot recognize this struggle as our struggle, as the struggle of the proletarian revolution."⁶⁸ The Comintern must help carry out the national revolution in the underdeveloped countries before starting to work on the proletarian uprising. The Comintern concludes frank and sincere alliances with the bourgeois nationalists, such as the Kuomintang, but must ask the latter not to pretend to be communists.⁶⁹

After Zinoviev's and Safarov's mutually contradictory reports had been unanimously accepted, the congress adopted a series of resolutions in which the Washington Conference was condemned.⁷⁰ A manifesto drafted by the congress explained that war had been declared on imperialism, and called on all workers and oppressed nations to unite "against Washington and the quadruple alliance of imperialists".⁷¹

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208-215.

⁷¹ *Correspondance internationale*, Feb. 18, 1922. pp. 95-96.

5. TACTICAL PROBLEMS.

During the spring of 1922, the E.C.C.I. held a number of meetings during which various tactical measures were decided, to translate the Bolshevik theories on the national and colonial question into practice. The policy of the Comintern toward subject and undeveloped nations was definitely becoming more clear, more conscious. The vague phraseology which had marked earlier attempts to deal with the explosive nationalism of the East was giving way to exact and concrete tactical formulations, applied not only to the whole East *en bloc*, but taking every single country's peculiarities into account.

From February 21, to March 4, 1922, the Enlarged Executive of the Comintern was in session in Moscow. The Eastern and colonial question, which had been so thoroughly neglected by the Third Congress, was discussed, and a general resolution was adopted. In this resolution, an effort was made to overcome the indifference of certain Western communists toward the colonies. The resolution stated that "considering the enormous importance of the national revolutionary movements in the colonial countries of the East... especially in Egypt and India, the Enlarged Executive urges the communist parties of all interested countries to organize a methodic campaign in the press, in the parliaments, and among the masses, for the liberation of the colonies".⁷² This concerns the British Communist Party more than any other, the resolution continued, and also the French and Italian parties. The central committees of the communist parties of colonialist countries should organize permanent colonial committees which would be charged with "a systematic propaganda, the upkeep of regular and continuous relations with the revolutionary organizations of the colonies, and practical contact with them".⁷³ The Communist Federation of the Balkans was to be responsible for the organization of the communist movement in Turkey. The executive furthermore urged all communist parties concerned to publish agitational literature in the native languages of the colonies, so that native revolutionary leaders could be trained as swiftly as possible.⁷⁴

Slightly later, the E.C.C.I. published several proclamation, of which one, addressed to the "workers of the world", demanded the liberation of Algeria and Tunisia from French rule.⁷⁵

A delicate question, which the Second and Third Congresses of the International had failed to solve, was again brought to the E.C.C.I.'s attention at the same period—the question of the relationship between Communism and Zionism. Ever since the beginning of the twentieth century, most Marxist parties had considered Zionism to be a reaction-

⁷² *Ibid.*, supplement no. 3, April 1922, p. 6.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, June 7, 1922, pp. 340-341.

ary, utopian, harmful movement. In the Russian Socialist Party in particular, the collaboration of socialists with Zionism had always been frowned upon. The bitter attacks which Lenin and Stalin had launched against the Jewish Socialist Bund—which was not Zionist—for its separatist and federalist tendencies, could be applied with even more force against the Zionist Socialists. The Zionist Socialist Party (Poale Zion), had consistently remained outside the main socialist parties of the countries in which it existed. Its theory stated that a class-conscious Jewish proletariat cannot arise unless the national demands of the Jewish nation are first satisfied in terms of a territorial state. "Jewish emigration, by taking the line of least resistance, becomes a colonization, which through its collective character conditions the concentration of the Jewish masses in a free territory. This emigration-colonization process lays, in the course of its development, the foundation for a future Jewish society."⁷⁶ The Poale Zion considered its essential mission to lie in "organizing the Jewish proletariat of all countries ... to create a general Zionist-Socialist Labor Party, ... making our views prevail in the ranks of the international proletariat ... , and influencing the territorialist policy of the Jewish bourgeoisie in a democratic sense, through support of the positive sides of this policy".⁷⁷ The party furthermore had pledged itself to fight against the "bourgeois-assimilationist" tendency of the major socialist parties, and of the Russian Socialist Party in particular, and to dissuade the Jewish workers from joining such parties.⁷⁸

Within this Poale Zion, a left wing had developed, which in 1921 wrote a letter to the E.C.C.I., asking to be admitted into the Comintern. The E.C.C.I. replied, agreeing to admit the Poale Zion under the condition that the latter ... dissolve itself. The World Council of the Poale Zion went as far as to agree to give up its existence, provided that the Poale Zion sections retain a certain autonomy within the Comintern and be free to agitate in favor of "concentration of the Jewish masses in Palestine".⁷⁹ The E.C.C.I. thereupon decided to condemn the Poale Zion's position as a petty bourgeois deviation, and to instruct the Communist Party of Palestine to fight Poale-Zionism with the utmost vigor. The Palestinian delegate to the E.C.C.I., Saar, was dismissed from his position because he had openly supported the Poale-Zion viewpoint against the Comintern.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the E.C.C.I. decided to keep a door open for the eventual admission of the left-wing Poale-Zionists into the Third International, and instructed especially the Russian Communist Party to support these left-wingers against the Zionist majority.⁸¹

⁷⁶ *Resolutionen und Beschlüsse des 1. ordentlichen Parteitages der Zionistisch-Sozialistischen Arbeiterpartei*, April 1906, p. 10.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁷⁹ *Tätigkeit des E.K.K.I. vom 3. bis zum 4. Weltkongress der K.I.*, p. 11.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

"The Palestinian idea, which serves to distract the Jewish working masses from the class struggle, is nothing but a petty-bourgeois counter-revolutionary utopia", the communist executive committee thundered. It urged all Communist parties to aid the left dissidents within the Poale Zion against the majority, and darkly explained that "after the rejection of the proposed conditions for admission, the only relations which can exist between the communists and the Poale Zion are those of fiercest conflict".⁸²

The Comintern was looking at Egypt with much interest, generally considering it potentially one of the most revolutionary countries of the East. In 1921, a General Confederation of Labor had been founded in Egypt, and various communist groups were functioning. Certain optimists in the Comintern detected signs of growing class consciousness in Egypt, and maintained that henceforth the future of the national revolution in that country lay entirely with the workers and fellahin, while the bourgeoisie had become counter-revolutionary.⁸³ That view, however, was not generally shared. At that time the various isolated communist groups which existed in Egypt were uniting into a single Communist Party, which asked for admission into the Third International. The E.C.C.I. appointed a committee to study the matter.⁸⁴

The other country to which the Comintern looked with high hopes was India. M. N. Roy reported that a revolutionary workers' and peasants' movement was growing up, and that Gandhi would soon have to choose between bourgeois-reformist appeasement of colonialism and the national liberation struggle of the underprivileged masses.⁸⁵ In March 1922, after the arrest of Gandhi, the Comintern expected an armed uprising in India.⁸⁶ It took an interest in the doings of Mota Singh, the leader of a Sikh peasant rebellion, who was condemned to five years of forced labor in the autumn of 1922.⁸⁷

The special attention devoted to Egypt and India was certainly somewhat founded on wishful thinking. Both countries were British colonies, and England, for the time being, was Russia's and the Comintern's main adversary. Therefore revolts in British-ruled territories would have caused more joy in the Bolshevik ranks than any other event.

South Africa also attracted the Comintern's attention because of large-scale strikes. The strikers were mostly Afrikaners, while the capitalist side was almost exclusively represented by British subjects. The Comintern therefore saw the possibility of an eventual link-up

⁸² *Correspondance internationale*, August 3, 1922, p. 411-2.

⁸³ "La troisième force de la révolution en Egypte", *Correspondance Internationale*, January 28, 1922, pp. 59-60.

⁸⁴ *Tätigkeit des EKKI...*, p. 73.

⁸⁵ M. N. Roy, "La révolte de l'Inde", *Correspondance internationale*, Feb. 22, 1922, p. 103.

⁸⁶ Shramendra Karsan, "La situation aux Indes", *Correspondance Int.*, March 29, 1922, pp. 183-4.

⁸⁷ Evelyn Roy, "Un révolutionnaire hindou: Mota Singh", *Corr. Int.*, Sept. 9, 1922, p. 522.

between Afrikaaner nationalism and the class struggle of the Afrikaans workers against British capitalists. It decided that all must be done to break down the race prejudice of the South African white workers, and link them to the Negro and other colored proletarians in a common fight, which would be both national and social.⁸⁸

China continued to be an interesting field for communist activity, in both theory and practice. The Comintern economist, Professor Eugene Varga, wrote that China was evolving toward capitalism at a very rapid rate, and that not only Sun Yat-sen's nationalist movement, but even the small state structures headed by Chang Tso-lin and other warlords, were symptoms of this process.⁸⁹ The outbreak, at the end of February, of a shortlived general strike in Hongkong further stimulated communist interest.⁹⁰

For the first time in 1922, Latin America began to play a role in the Comintern's concern. The Mexican Revolution was rolling on, overthrowing the feudal remnants of the old regime, and the young Communist Party of Mexico was gaining influence. Moscow was, however, alarmed by the fact that the Mexican communists were ideologically unreliable, and heavily influenced by anarchist ideas, such as anti-centralism and belief in individual terrorist action.⁹¹ On the other hand, a Communist Party was founded in Uruguay, and the E.C.C.I. appointed a committee to investigate that group and decide whether it was fit for membership in the Third International.⁹² A Brazilian Communist Party was founded in Rio de Janeiro, and admitted to Comintern membership.⁹³ And in Chile, the national trade union federation decided by majority vote to join the Red Trade Union International (Profintern).⁹⁴

6. BOLSHEVISM VS. NATIONAL SOCIALISM.

In the meantime a discussion about the communist approach to the national question was taking place inside the Communist Party of Russia. This discussion, though applied primarily to the problem of dealing with the national minorities inside the country, had implications for the Comintern and for its action in the colonies as well. While the Comintern leaders were disagreeing as to whether the proletarian revolution of the advanced countries must precede the liberation of the colonies, and whether the correct action in the colonies involved the immediate establishment of soviets or not, the Russian leaders found

⁸⁸ W. Lada, "Lutte de classes en Afrique du Sud", *Corr. Int.*, Feb. 25, 1922, p. 114, and Yvon Jones, "Problèmes du travail en Afrique du Sud", *ibid.*, March 3, 1922, pp. 128-9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 1, 1922, pp. 35-6.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, March 25, 1922, p. 180.

⁹¹ See Stirner, "Le mouvement ouvrier au Mexique", *Corr. Int.*, March 11, 1922.

⁹² *Tätigkeit des EKKI*, p. 51.

⁹³ *Corr. Int.*, August 9, 1922.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, May 20, 1922.

themselves at a loss regarding the question of eventual conflict between the interests of communism and nationalism. Stalin—who in the Comintern represented the “Eastern” tendency, favorable to collaboration with bourgeois nationalists—was beginning to represent inside Russia a policy of frank and brutal subordination of national to communist interests. Even though he continued to issue theoretical warnings against “Great Russian chauvinism”, his own actions in dealing with Caucasians and other minorities seem to have been very blunt and harsh. This provoked the ideological rebellion of a communist leader, who during an earlier period had been a devoted collaborator of Stalin: the Tatar Mirza Sultan-Galiev. Ever since the revolution of 1917, Sultan Galiev had insisted on the importance of the movement of the Eastern peoples, and had accused the Bolsheviks of placing too much emphasis on the European and proletarian aspect of their action.⁹⁵ As long as Stalin agreed with Lenin that the subject people must be given the widest liberty to develop their national autonomy, before being gradually drawn into unity with the industrialized centers, Sultan-Galiev’s opinion was officially approved in Russia. By 1921-1922, however, as Stalin’s Commissariat of Nationalities was becoming more and more Russian and centralist, Sultan-Galiev developed a definitely “heretical” doctrine. He came to the conclusion that the proletariat of a socialist or semi-socialist country will continue to oppress colonies, and that the abolition of the capitalist form of exploitation does not automatically mean the end of chauvinism or imperialism. From this conclusion, Sultan Galiev went on to advocate the foundation of a *Colonial International* to fight the predominance of the industrialized countries (whether capitalist or proletarian-led). Applying Marxist terminology to his doctrine, and resolutely passing from communism to a form of national-socialism, he declared that a “dictatorship of the colonies and semi-colonies over the metropolises” [*sic*] must be established.⁹⁶ This deviation of Sultan-Galiev—who had a considerable number of followers among his Tatar countrymen—was a reflection of deep conflicts which appeared at all moments among the Western and Eastern revolutionaries, not only inside Russia but also in the International. At the same time it showed that those who, like Stalin, took an “Eastern” stand in the ranks of the Comintern, were not necessarily respectful of the national peculiarities of the East, once communist rule had been established. The only great European communist leader who remained unflinchingly true to his policy of enlightened support of the Eastern national revolutions was Lenin himself. Lenin, who in 1922 had suffered his first stroke and from whose hands the reins of power were slipping, wrote in October 1922: “*I am declaring war on Great Russian chauvinism.*”⁹⁷

In December of the same year, Lenin, highly alarmed by reports of Stalin’s, Ordzhonikidze’s, and Dzerzhinsky’s brutal repressive activities

⁹⁵ R. Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-170.

⁹⁶ R. Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-262.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

against Georgian autonomists, wrote his famous "Letters on the National Question".⁹⁸ In these "Letters", Lenin violently denounces all attempts to subordinate national autonomy to administrative convenience. He states that the Russian administrative apparatus is not socialist, for "what we call ours is an apparatus still thoroughly alien to us and representing a bourgeois Tsarist mechanism, which we had no opportunity of conquering during the five years..." If this essentially Tsarist administration should succeed in subjecting all nationalities to its absolute rule, all freedom would disappear at the hands of "the Great Russian chauvinist, ... the scoundrel and violator, which the typical Russian bureaucrat is". After warning against the "Derzhimordas" (name of a brutal policeman in Gogol's *The Inspector General*), Lenin declares that "a Georgian who... accuses others of 'social-chauvinism' (while himself being not only a veritable 'social-chauvinist' but also a crude imperialistic Derzhimorda) — that Georgian in reality injures the interests of the proletarian class solidarity, because nothing delays so much the development and consolidation of the proletarian class solidarity as national injustice..." And Lenin insists: "*It is better to stretch too far in the direction of complaisance and softness toward the national minorities, than too little.*" The Georgian "Derzhimorda" whom Lenin had in mind, was Ordzhonikidze, who should receive "exemplary punishment". Stalin and Dzerzhinsky, too, "must be held politically responsible" for the Great Russian chauvinist excesses. To overcome the danger of neo-colonialist violation of national rights inside the Soviet State, Lenin proposed decentralization of the administrative "apparatus", and more effective party control over the bureaucracy. Unfortunately he failed to see that the party itself was thoroughly bureaucratized, and that the only effective measure against the growth of tyranny would have lain in a revival of the democratically elected soviets and the abolition of "vertical" party organization and of control from above. Nevertheless, these letters show the colossal difference which exists between Lenin and his successors, in terms of character and ideals.

But while there was real dissatisfaction among the nationalities subject to Russian Soviet rule, the Comintern was not affected by it. In the Comintern, the occasional hostility between Westerners and Easterners remained at the level of small disputes, of sporadic bickering. The fact that the very men, who inside Russia were chauvinist-minded, succeeded in taking an enlightened "Eastern" view in the International, and joined forces with Oriental representatives against the Western diehards, prevented the Sultan-Galiev dissidence from spreading abroad. Instead of Sultan-Galiev's national-socialist "Colonial International", an "Intercolonial Union", accepting the leadership of the E.C.C.I., was founded by Asiatic revolutionaries in 1921. The chairman of this Inter-

⁹⁸ These letters can be found in the Trotsky Archive, Harvard College Library. Their authenticity is generally recognized. Cf. Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-277.

colonial Union, which had its headquarters in Paris, was a young Vietnamese communist named Nguyen Ai-Quoc.⁹⁹ He was one day to become famous throughout the world under the name of Ho Chi-Minh.

7. THE FOURTH CONGRESS: THE GENERAL DISCUSSION.

At the end of 1922, when the fourth congress of the Communist International met, it was obvious that the discussion of the national and colonial question was going to play an important role. As we have pointed out, the year 1922 had brought a consolidation of communist influence in the underdeveloped areas of the world. At the same time, the Comintern as a whole was continuing to switch into a defensive position. Since Russia had adopted a moderate policy, trying to establish a *modus vivendi* with the West, the Comintern took up a "soft" line, even in cases where radical tactics might have been successful. The economic recovery of the capitalist world continued; anti-communism was growing in the Western countries. In Italy and in some of the East European countries the anti-communist movement was taking on a new and virulent form: fascism. Fascism was something which traditional Marxists had not reckoned with. Before 1920, Lenin himself had assumed that capitalism would remain identified with democracy, and that at least in the advanced Western countries "white terror" would consist in nothing worse than occasional police brutalities against strikers, or mild prison sentences meted out to agitators. The murderous counter-revolutionary violence of Mussolini's Black Shirts came as a shock to the Comintern. All of a sudden the wild accusations launched by the communists against the "blood-soaked capitalist murderers" were no longer exaggerations, as applied to certain countries. The storm trooper took the place of the relatively harmless classical policeman, and torture and death took the place of fines and imprisonment as methods of repression. The fourth congress was therefore dominated by a defensive state of mind. The slogan of the "united front" was launched—union of all working class forces against the threat of counter-revolution. As a corollary to the slogan of united front of the workers of the West, it was natural that the union of communists with Eastern revolutionary nationalists was going to be stressed more than ever before. And as the communist forces in the West were being driven back by the tide of reviving conservatism, the outbreak of an Eastern nationalist revolution became an increasingly desirable goal. *Communist Russia followed the tactical tradition of Tsarist Russia—foiled in the West, she turned her attention to the East, while awaiting an occasion to recommence her Western expansion at a later date.* And the International expressed this general switch in direction on the ideological and agitational level.

⁹⁹ V. Thompson, *The Left Wing in Southeast Asia*, p. 21.

The Eastward evolution of communism as a whole was an encouragement to the Asiatic delegates. They showed far more self-assurance than at the previous congresses. For the first time a whole group of truly capable and responsible leaders had come from the East. Aside from M. N. Roy, Sultan Zadeh and Sen Katayama, forceful personalities such as Tan Malaka from Indonesia, Orkhan from Turkey and Tahar Boudhenga from the Tunisian branch of the French Communist Party were present. These men took an energetic and even aggressive stand against the "Western" orthodox-Marxist die-hards, and subjected the European communist parties to sharp criticism. The national and colonial question was broadened, at the same time. It no longer dealt exclusively with Asia and North Africa, but came to include various oppressed ethnic groups such as the American Negroes. The United States delegation proposed that a special Negro commission be appointed to analyze this problem on the basis of the general theses concerning the national and colonial question.¹⁰⁰ Latin America was also well represented for the first time, by Penelón (Argentina), Pintos (Uruguay) and Stirner (Mexico).

Zinoviev, in his report on the activities of the Executive Committee, mentioned the growth of the communist movement in the East. He particularly stressed this development in the two countries which traditionally — and, as we now know, quite mistakenly — were considered the most fruitful ground for revolution: India and Egypt,¹⁰¹ but also mentioned Turkey and China. This time, as at the previous congress of the International, Zinoviev's adherence to the left wing in the Russian party, with its ultra-proletarian program, prompted him to speak of the Eastern revolution as a social more than a national phenomenon. He stated that the communist comrades in the Eastern countries had begun to carry out a task which consisted in "marching forward as vanguard of the whole liberation movement against the *bourgeoisie*".¹⁰² This phrase shows that Zinoviev considered the Eastern revolution as a social upheaval, scarcely different in nature from the Western proletarian revolution.

Tan Malaka from Indonesia implicitly contradicted Zinoviev, and also challenged the more radical among the rules which Lenin had laid down in the theses of the second congress. Speaking of the united front, Malaka asked with which nationalist movements the communists might conclude an alliance and with which they might not. The nationalist movement in the East frequently took one of the following forms: boycott movement against foreign merchandise, or Pan-Islamism. Did the communists have the right to support such groups as the Pan-Islamists? It will be remembered that Lenin's theses of the second congress had specifically mentioned Pan-Islamism as a reactionary trend which was

¹⁰⁰ *Protokoll des Vierten Kongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale*, p. 26.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

to be "unmasked" in the eyes of the masses. Tan Malaka disagreed. He felt that both Pan-Islamism and the boycott movement constituted useful tendencies during the national-democratic phase of the Eastern revolution. In India, he pointed out, the boycott movement, in spite of its native capitalist character, had a positive effect, for it helped to stimulate revolutionary feeling among the common people.¹⁰³ The same thing was true of the past collaboration between communists and the Pan-Islamists of Java. At the beginning of 1921, the Javanese C.P. succeeded in making the Sarekat Islam adopt the slogan of "all power to the poor peasants and proletarians!"¹⁰⁴ The split between communists and Sarekat Islam was not due to any real incompatibility, but to the fact that the communists did not go far enough in collaborating with the Islamists. "The [Dutch colonial] government made use of the slogan of the second congress of the Comintern: Fight Pan-Islamism! What did the government say to the simple peasants? It said: You see, the communists are not only trying to divide you; they even want to destroy your religion."¹⁰⁵ Thus, according to the Indonesian leader, the whole idea of non-collaboration with certain kinds of nationalists was wrong. He disagreed completely with the first alternative presented by Lenin's theses of the Second Congress: that of avoiding the bourgeois phase of development.

At this important point, Tan Malaka was interrupted by the chairman who told him that his time was up. Malaka reacted strongly. "I came from India and have travelled for forty days to get here!" he said curtly, turned his back on the chairman and continued to speak. For the first time a man from the Far East was dominating a gathering of the Comintern. He was criticizing Lenin, rebuking the chairman, speaking on and on with fiery eloquence. The delegates broke into admiring applause.

It is necessary to work with Islam instead of fighting it, Malaka went on. All Easterners know how powerful the hold of religion is on the peasant masses. "The supporters of the Sarekat Islam believe in our propaganda and they are with us . . . with their stomachs, but their heart remains with the Sarekat Islam and with its promise of Paradise."¹⁰⁶ Since 1922, Malaka and others were trying to re-establish close spiritual bonds with the Muslim masses. They used religious phraseology and a scholastic type of arguments which had an immense effect. When asked whether they were Muslims, they replied: "Yes, when we stand face to face with God we are Muslims but when we stand face to face with men we are not, for God has said that many men are children of Shaitan."¹⁰⁷ On the occasion of the railroad strike, they said: "God is mighty, but He has ordered it so that on earth the railroad workers are

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

mightiest! The railway workers are the executive committee of God in this world!" Militant Islam is a whole way of life, concluded Tan Malaka; it is the embodiment of the struggle for national emancipation, and therefore progressive and anti-imperialist.¹⁰⁸

After this speech, which had already gone to be core of the problem, the discussion of the Eastern question proper was opened. The discussion began with an extremely lengthy and scholarly report by Professor Ravesteyn, one of the Dutch delegates. He lectured for one hour on the development of European international relations from 1815 to 1922 and on their impact on the underdeveloped countries of the East.¹⁰⁹ He showed a great sympathetic understanding of the forces of Islamism and nationalism, and agreed thoroughly with Tan Malaka. The proletariat must support Pan-Islamism, he concluded. "The mightiest enemy of the proletariat as well as of the oriental and especially the Islamic peoples is the British Empire." The collapse of the British Empire would send all other colonial powers crumbling into the dust as well.¹¹⁰

While Ravesteyn and Tan Malaka represented the most right-wing opinion in regard to the national and colonial question, M. N. Roy took a more proletarian-revolutionary stand. He was beginning to develop a theory of "decolonization", which had as its consequence certain very definite tactical conclusions. One must be careful not to look at all colonial and semi-colonial countries in the same way, he said. They could be divided into three categories: 1) Countries with highly developed native capitalism and a class-conscious bourgeoisie; 2) countries with only very slight capitalist development, and feudal predominance; 3) primitive countries with feudal patriarchalism.¹¹¹ In the first type of country, he explained, the national bourgeoisie has ceased to be revolutionary and is seeking the protection of the imperialist powers against the militant workers and peasants. In the second type of country, the feudal class is allied to imperialism, and the bourgeoisie is hesitating between a revolutionary and a conservative course of action. Finally in the most backward, patriarchal countries, even the feudal class can play an objectively revolutionary role. In India and Egypt, Roy said, the bourgeoisie is split into two camps: one half-revolutionary and one counter-revolutionary. Even the half-revolutionary group of the bourgeoisie is, however, highly unreliable and hesitant, and must under no circumstances be permitted to hold in its hands the uncontested leadership of the national emancipation movement. The autonomy of the Communist Party is of the highest importance in all countries of the Orient. The new methods of capitalism, which have come into being since the end of the first world war, no longer tend to retard the industrial development of the colonies, but on the contrary to encourage

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 560-590.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 589-90.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 591.

it, in order to develop new markets for the producers' goods of the European and North American industries. This trend of economic decolonization, Roy concluded, makes alliances with the national bourgeoisie more and more dangerous, since the industrial development of a given country, with the consequent increase in class differentiation, is likely to tie the national bourgeoisie closer and closer to the interests of world capitalism. Only the communist parties can therefore lead truly liberating national movements; the nationalist bourgeoisie no longer can.¹¹²

Two distinct basic positions were thus defined — one favorable to collaboration with all "objectively" revolutionary forces, and the other suspicious of the non-communist parties. The former position, which one may call right-wing, inasmuch as it momentarily refrained from hostility against the upper classes in the colonies, was partly supported by Karl Radek, who, however, added a new element to it, by voicing a very pessimistic opinion regarding the development in the East. Radek expressed his point of view in his usual tone of sarcastic wit, and probably succeeded in irritating both sides. After saying that the Communist International must support all bourgeois movements which for the time being play an objectively progressive role (even if these movements should at the same time be supported by one of the imperialist powers), he went on to explain that the revolution would not come for an exceedingly long time in the East.¹¹³ In China, he maintained, the time for a democratic republic had not yet come. Therefore it did not make the slightest difference whether one supported Sun Yat-sen or Wu Pei-fu! One should tacitly support both, since they both represented the beginning of the capitalist phase of historical development.¹¹⁴ All the communists need to do at the moment would be to form small parties, in order to teach the workers to support capitalist evolution against feudalism. "And all this means: 'It's a long way to Tipperary!'" And if the [Eastern] comrades complain that we're not very interested in their work, I must say: As a matter of fact, interest is aroused by deeds. When we hear for the twentieth time that Persia has plenty of workers, these are things which one doesn't learn at a congress but from a geography primer."¹¹⁵ At the time of the Second Congress, Radek continued, an immediate revolution seemed in the air in the East, but at the present time the most important task was simply to organize and to wait.

8. THE FOURTH CONGRESS: THESES AND RESOLUTIONS.

Along with these matters of overall interest, the congress had to deal with important specific questions. Tahar Boudengha (Tunisia) raised a violent complaint against the central committee of the French Com-

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 592-8.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 628-631.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 632.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

munist Party. The French party, according to Tahar Boudengha, refrained from agitating against colonialism, out of fear of losing votes in the elections. Furthermore the party section of Sidi-bel-Abbes (Algeria) committed an extremely grave deviation.

The Sidi-bel-Abbes group had taken an ultra-Western viewpoint, assuming that the proletarian revolution in the metropolis must precede the democratic independence movement of the colonies. On the basis of that assumption, the group had decided not to criticize colonialism. The reasons it gave were expressed as follows: "...The communist section of Sidi-bel-Abbes is of the opinion... that the best means to further liberation movements in our colony is not to give up this colony—as Point Eight of the Twenty-One Conditions for Comintern membership demands—but that, on the contrary, it should be the task of the Communist Party to increase the force of... trade unions and communism [inside the colonies]... The liberation of the native population of Algeria can only come as a consequence of revolution in France."¹¹⁶ The Tunisian delegate asked whether these deviationists had been duly disciplined and demanded more decided anti-colonialist action on the part of the French communists.¹¹⁷ Orkhan and Nik Bin (Iran) joined in energetic protest against the indifference of the French and English parties.¹¹⁸

Another specialized question was that the Egyptian Socialist Party, which asked to join the Communist International. This party was so curiously organized, and so confused in the domain of ideas and tactics, that a special commission had been appointed to study it. While the commission was still debating about the ways of healing the ailments of the strange organism they were examining, a member of the latter, Khosmi-el-Arabi, arose at the congress and made a brief but fiery speech. He admitted that the party had made mistakes, but insisted that these mistakes had been corrected.¹¹⁹ In the same breath, however, he informed his astonished audience that Egypt was ripe for a social revolution and that very soon "the red flag will wave over the pyramids".¹²⁰ The Socialist Party of Egypt was finally admitted to the International, with the condition that it exclude certain elements, "bolshvize" its organization and change its name to "Communist Party of Egypt".¹²¹

The Negro question was discussed separately after the Eastern question, though it belonged to the same general category. Billings (U.S.A.) reported on the race problem in his country and enumerated the various racial or social movements which the American colored people had founded. He debunked the National Association for the

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 605-6. See also G. Gauthierod, *Le Bolchévisme aux colonies et l'impérialisme rouge*, p. 265.

¹¹⁷ *Protokoll...*, pp. 606-7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 623-6.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 616-7.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 615.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 825.

Advancement of Colored People as a bourgeois, reformist organization, and expressed the opinion that the communists should form a united front with the radical rank and file of Marcus Garvey's movement, and with the African Blood Brotherhood, which he qualified as "very revolutionary".¹²² He explained that race resentment had reached such a high pitch that the colonial workers distrusted even the most radical and revolutionary whites, so that the Party must as quickly as possible form a staff of colored organizers who would be accepted by their own ethnic group.

The final resolutions on the Eastern and Negro questions, as well as on other matters which directly or indirectly touched the national and colonial problem, reflect a compromise between the positions of Tan Malaka and Roy, leaning a little more toward the former than toward the latter, however. The doctrine of collaboration with the revolutionary middle class of young countries was definitely established. The hesitations which had characterized the second and the third congress — hesitations between ultra-left and more moderate tactics — were over. The general theses on the Eastern question stated that the world war had weakened imperialism and that the growth of nationalist fermentation in the colonies was steady and mighty. In opposition to Roy's theory of decolonization, the theses maintained that European capitalism continued to keep the colonies underdeveloped and non-industrial.¹²³ The theses furthermore insisted that a national independence struggle could not be led by the upper (feudal) classes, except in the case of exceptionally backward areas, such as "Mesopotamia or Mongolia".¹²⁴ Pan-Islamism was defined as a movement which could easily be used by the imperialists for their own ends, by exploiting the "religious prejudices" of a native population, but which nevertheless was able to play a constructive revolutionary role, and which must be supported in some cases. And the theses summed up the general tactical rules by stating: "Taking into account the fact that under different conditions the most diverse elements can be the carriers of the national will of independence, the Communist International supports every national revolutionary movement against imperialism."¹²⁵

But such support must not be an unconditional one. The Comintern had the duty to base its program on the social needs of the property-less masses, and to "expose" any attempt of the bourgeois nationalists to ignore these needs or to make a compromise with imperialism. By so doing, it would gradually, step by step, conquer the leadership of the national movement. The agrarian question was particularly important in this domain. During every phase of its action in support of a nationalist movement, the International must demand a land reform, with expropriation of the feudal owners and redistribution of the soil among

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 694.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1034-35.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1036.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1036.

the poor peasants.¹²⁶ At the same time, no concessions might be made to the nationalist bourgeoisie in the demands for complete freedom of action for the trade unions, for social laws, for the eight-hour day, and other labor actions. And the Comintern must never cease to denounce the attempt of the bourgeois nationalists to establish their leadership over the proletarians through "false" socialist parties, or doctrines "such as the 'state socialism' which is being preached by some representatives of the Kuomintang in China".¹²⁷

In general, the proletariat of the colonies must guard itself against falling prey to either one of two errors. The first error would lie in refusing to participate in the national-democratic movement, for reasons of communist purity. The second would lie in concluding a complete alliance with the bourgeoisie, accepting its leadership, and failing to represent the social demands of the poor classes, and to struggle for communist leadership of the national liberation movement. Both deviations were characterized by the theses as "opportunism".¹²⁸

The Comintern must keep in mind, the theses insisted, that the united front with the nationalist bourgeoisie of the colonial countries cannot last forever. In the long run the bourgeoisie would acquire a reactionary character and a phase of social struggle, marked by the establishment of soviets, would succeed the national democratic stage. The proletariat should demand a bourgeois type of democracy in the colonies "only insofar as the present relation of forces does not permit it to demand the immediate realization of its soviet program".¹²⁹ Throughout its participation in the national liberation movement, of a "semi-colony" (i.e., and underdeveloped country enjoying nominal political independence), the Comintern must demand a close alliance between the bourgeois leadership of the movement and Soviet Russia. This was necessary so that the national movement might not conclude an alliance with one imperialist power against another, thereby losing its revolutionary character.¹³⁰

Finally the theses instructed the communist parties of all European countries which owned colonies, to intensify their anti-colonialist propaganda both at home and in the colonies, and to establish close organizational links with the communist parties of the latter. In colonies such as Egypt and Algeria, the European communist party concerned, (i.e. the English or French), must cease having separate European sections. In Egypt and Algeria, Europeans and Arabs must be members of the same party cells, in constant touch with each other. A form of segregated organization would amount to "a hidden form of colonization which supports the interests of the imperialists".¹³¹

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1037.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1038.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1040.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1041.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1043.

In regard to the Negro question, the congress was of the opinion that "the history of the Negro in America enables him to play an important role in the liberation struggle of the whole African race".¹³² The congress felt, furthermore, that the American Negroes, since the first world war, were beginning to realize that their race enemy was at the same time the class enemy of all American workers, colored and white. "For this reason, the fourth congress declares it to be its duty to apply the 'Theses on the Colonial Question' also to the Negro problem."¹³³ The Comintern, through its American section, should therefore employ the following tactics:

- 1) Support any Negro movement which attacks or criticizes capitalism;
- 2) Fight for equal wages and rights, and fair employment practices;
- 3) Influence the A.F. of L. to accept Negro members on an equal basis;
- 4) Convoke a general Negro "national congress".¹³⁴

9. CONCLUSION.

If one seeks to sum up the development of Comintern policy in regard to the national and colonial question, from the third to the fourth congress, one can say that a remarkable clarification of aims took place during that period. External circumstances forced the Comintern leaders to abandon the idea of immediate soviet revolution in the colonies. The "stabilization of capitalism" in the West, which had already been perceived by the second congress, had continued. In Europe, the communist offensive had not only come to a halt, but the forces of counter-revolution had begun to take energetic measures against the "red menace". To keep the positions which had been won during the first revolutionary wave, the communists were forced to seek a "united front" with the social democrats. The same was therefore necessary in the colonies. But while the tactics of the communists came to be purely defensive in the West, they continued to be offensive in the East. The offensive in the East had to be of a limited nature however. Since no proletarian revolution occurred in Europe, no immediate soviet revolution was possible in the Orient. The first alternative implied in Lenin's theses of 1920, that of a direct passage from feudalism to communism in the East, had to be discarded, and the second alternative — support of the bourgeois-democratic revolution as a basis for later communist development — to be accepted. Even though Zinoviev still saw fit to mention the eventuality of using the soviet method in the colonies, the right-wing tacticians such as Ravesteyn, Safarov and Tan Malaka made their point of view prevail. The overall situation of the communist forces in 1922-1923 made it inevitable that the tactics of cooperation with bourgeois nationalists should be officially consecrated.

¹³² *Thesen und Resolutionen des Vierten Weltkongresses der K.I.*, p. 52.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Certain details of Lenin's theses of 1920 were changed. Thus, while the theses of the second congress contained an explicit condemnation of Pan-Islamism, those of the fourth congress, basing themselves on the practical experience of communists in the Muslim countries, decided that Pan-Islamism was, at least under certain circumstances, a relatively progressive movement which must be supported.

In certain respects, the theses of the fourth congress, and the discussions which preceded their adoption, showed a sense of relativism, of dialectics, which continued the best tradition of Marxian thought. The world revolution was considered, not as a simple overall event which was likely to take place from one day to the next; but rather as a complicated gradual trend, as a battle to be fought on many different fields under very diverse and often mutually contradictory conditions. The basis was laid for a separate method of analysis of each particular national movement. In each case the question to be answered was the following: is this national movement objectively progressive, and if so, what is the nature of its progressiveness? Relatively to what is it progressive? The fourth congress kept an old Marxian dogma in mind: that only the proletarian revolution, the ultimate ideal of the classless society, justifies the actions of the working class representatives in limited tactical domains. Though the congress insisted on the general fact that a nationalist movement in an underdeveloped country has an objectively revolutionary significance even under bourgeois leadership, it was careful to keep in mind the relative and passing character of the revolutionary content of such a movement. It clearly stated that sooner or later all bourgeois groups would turn reactionary, that all alliances with such groups must only be temporary and limited, that the Comintern must at every moment, while conditionally supporting the nationalists, be ready to point out and criticize their weaknesses. The path mapped out before the colonial Comintern sections was narrow and thorny: their alliance with those middle class elements which for the moment could play a revolutionary role must be close enough to constitute a real national front, close enough to draw the masses into the national movement, close enough to avoid the left deviation of "sectarianism" and "purism". On the other hand, the communists must remain sufficiently independent within the national front to represent the social interests of the poor classes, to state clearly the difference between their ultimate aim and that of the bourgeois leaders, and to avoid the right deviation of "opportunism", of capitulation to nationalist leadership. The way in which this narrow and thorny path was to be followed would depend on each country's peculiarities. The failure of revolution in the West, and the fact of gradual and uneven development implied a separate adaptation of the general tactical line to each different country. In Turkey, for example, the communists were required to follow an extremely difficult and heroic path: to preach conditional support of a nationalist movement which was outlawing and persecuting them. In India, on the other hand, the communists were asked to behave in an extremely critical way and to attack and "expose" the bourgeois leaders constantly.

While everyone present at the fourth congress generally seemed to agree on the main tactical tenets, two ways of interpretation were present and continued to clash. On the one hand there were those who, like Zinoviev and especially Trotsky, continued to keep their eyes focused on the West and who expected the European proletarian setback to be only very temporary. The communists of this tendency shrank from going too deeply into national engagements and wished to keep the Comintern as independent as possible and as ready as possible to have recourse to immediate soviet revolution if the possibility should arise. They continued to speak of peasant soviets and leaned dangerously to the left of the blessed, thorny path. On the other hand those of the Ravesteyn tendency regarded almost all nationalist movements in the East as positive events, and saw the revolution primarily as a struggle of the underdeveloped have-nots against the great European empire, and especially against the British. They looked at the national incarnations which both revolution and counter-revolution had taken, as historical phenomena which would be valid for a long time to come. These men, with their almost national-socialist leanings, had their foot dangerously close to the "opportunistic" abyss which runs along the right edge of the Comintern's heavenly path.

The history of the years which followed the fourth congress of the Comintern is the history of the intensification of the struggle between the two leanings. If the Comintern had remained what it was at the beginning, the two interpretations of the meaning of tactical alliance with nationalism could have continued to coexist and to settle their differences by free exchange of opinion. But a process of stratification of leadership had begun. The International continued to fade, the Soviet State continued to grow. The increasing dictatorship of Soviet Russia over the Comintern made all theoretical tendencies more rigid, more extreme. Instead of growing together through free discussion, the left and the right interpretation of national tactics were to grow further and further apart.

As we pointed out earlier, the Soviet State had taken the place of the world revolution, to a considerable degree. While theoretically all the isolated tactical aspects of Comintern action were to be coordinated by the overall interest of the world proletariat, in reality they were subordinated to the interests of a state. The Soviet state was a sort of geographic understructure of the International. As Russia, unable to conquer the West, turned toward the East, thus the Comintern, unable to call forth proletarian revolution in Europe, turned to national revolution in Asia. The substitution of Russian for international influences became more marked. The endless discussions between the "left" (proletarian world-revolutionary) wing and the "right" (national-revolutionary) wing reflected dissensions which were going on *inside the Soviet State*. The Russian leaders who were favorable to a "soft" line inside their own country (N.E.P., concessions to the well-to-do peasants, etc.) advocated an analogous moderate line in the In-

ternational. And the partisans of a harsh revolutionary course of action inside Russia appeared on the international scene as advocates of non-cooperation with the colonial bourgeoisie. The Asian leaders such as Tan Malaka or Roy were undoubtedly sincere representatives of their own peoples. But through the fact of Russian predominance, they became, at the same time, actors on the stage of Moscow's internal politics, knowingly or unknowingly supporting one or another of the fractions which were fighting for control over the Russian party.

And yet they could not forever ignore the fact that Russian and international communist interests were *not* identical. For after the fourth congress it became quite apparent that Russian interests demanded central, monolithic, stiff control over the Comintern, while the real interests of the various colonial revolutionary groups should have demanded, on the contrary, *decentralization*. Only a decentralized International could have adjusted itself to all the diverse and intricate local conditions of each separate field of action. The growth of Russian bureaucratic control meant immobility and clumsiness at the bottom of the communist apparatus, at the points of actual contact with the masses. This phenomenon of growing top-heaviness became evident soon after the fourth congress.

V

THE COMINTERN AND THE NATIONAL-COLONIAL QUESTION FROM THE FOURTH TO THE FIFTH CONGRESS (1922-1924)

Even though the Bolsheviks had realized by the end of 1922 that world revolution was not for the immediate future, and that the situation, as far as the colonies were concerned, required a slow and gradual penetration of Soviet influence, occasional reversions to ultra-revolutionary methods occurred from time to time. During the year 1923 such ultra-left tendencies were re-inforced by the fact that the European revolution momentarily seemed to be possible again. As Germany grew more and more restive and chaotic under the double pressure of inflation and of French occupation in the Ruhr, Moscow once more returned to the belief that perhaps the final collapse of capitalism was near, and that the German workers might rise in all their might to burst asunder the chains which bound them. Germany continued to be considered the heartland of socialism, the greatest hope for the wretched of the whole earth. If Germany should go communist, the whole world would follow in its wake. It is not surprising therefore, that during the year 1923 the Comintern passed through a "Western" phase, neglecting the Asiatic front slightly, and conceiving new doubts about the correctness of the policy of collaboration with Eastern nationalists. For if it should be true that proletarian revolution should break out in the West after all, then the policy of gradual penetration in the East would have to be replaced by one of bold revolutionary attack marked by the immediate creation of soviets.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that even during this brief period of return to the proletarian-revolutionary position, the Comintern did not abandon its newly acquired consciousness of the importance of nationalism. Indeed it preserved this consciousness—gained from its Eastern experience—so strongly that it even tended to apply it to the capitalist West. While a few years earlier the Communist International had sought to apply its Western experience to the East, it now tried to do the opposite.

1. EVENTS PRECEDING THE FIFTH CONGRESS.

a. *Germany.*

Germany was a capitalist nation but a weak, defeated one. A certain group within the Comintern, led by the rash Karl Radek, argued that Germany had become a semi-colony. Even though she had known a high phase of capitalist development, the French and English capitalists had broken her down and enslaved her. Radek and his friends therefore advocated a policy which would treat Germany as though she were a backward colony of the Asian type. The German revolution, like that of India or Egypt, would have to carry out a task of national emancipation from French and British domination. The main enemy of the German proletariat, according to Radek, was not the German bourgeoisie, but foreign imperialism. Radek felt that the German bourgeoisie, and especially the oppressed middle-class, would be able to play an objectively progressive role, by fighting for the national liberation of their country, just like the middle class of a backward colony. He therefore favored a policy of support of the German nationalist extremists, who were trying to start a violent uprising against the French in the Ruhr. The fascist Schlageter, who had formerly fought the Left in the Baltic countries, suddenly became an object of admiration in Radek's propaganda.¹ Instead of agitating for a socialist revolution of the German workers against both German and foreign capitalism, Comintern agents in Germany acted in a spirit of national union, of social moderation, which would have seemed more in place in China than in Central Europe. On the premise that Germany as a nation would have to be liberated before the proletariat could make its revolution, the Communist Party supported the Ruhr magnates in their struggle against their French rivals. In the name of overall national regeneration, they established a united front government with the moderate socialists in Thuringia. Brandler, the orthodox follower of Moscow on the central committee of the German Communist Party, carried out this policy in accord with instructions from Russia, and in agreement with Radek. The left wing of the German party—Ruth Fischer, Maslow, Urbahns,—fought this "Eastern" and national-conscious orientation tooth and nail, but when they finally succeeded in making their views prevail, and in discrediting the Brandler-Radek tendency, it was too late. The German Communist Party was asked overnight to remember that it was the representative of a militant Western proletariat and not of a backward colony. An abortive revolution—more a putsch than a popular uprising—broke out. In Saxony the communists were suppressed almost bloodlessly. In Hamburg, they were quelled after three days of deadly street fighting.

¹ For an account of Radek's attitude in the Schlageter affair, cf. Ruth Fischer, *Stalin and German Communism*, pp. 267-287.

This German fiasco was a consequence of the contradiction inherent in the whole centralized organization of the Third International. We have already mentioned that contradiction previously. While the interests of the Russian leadership demanded a centralized organization, revolutionary adaptation to local conditions would have needed the opposite. Russian interests predominated over those of the German revolutionaries. Having become accustomed to the idea that national movements should be supported—in the East—the Comintern was too slow to adjust itself on time to the exigencies of the German situation. Having painfully freed itself from its original Western mentality in its dealing with the East, it carried its new Eastern policy over to the West when it suddenly had to face the German crisis.

b. *The Islamic Countries.*

While the Comintern was thus unsuccessfully trying to apply the tactics of the East to Germany, it continued to be active in the colonial and underdeveloped countries.

- In collaboration with the official organs of the Soviet Government, the International continued its attempt to bring Persia into the “anti-imperialist” front. Continuing to work on the basis of good feeling which had been created by the Russo-Persian treaty of 1921, the communists supported all those tendencies in Iranian political life which ran in the direction of modern national consciousness. After the Reds had sacrificed Kutchuk Khan and his extremists, the middle-class and upper-class nationalists, such as Reza Khan, often turned to them for advice regarding their dealings with the British.² The Soviet Government, represented by Theodore Rothstein at Teheran, and the International, represented by the weak and persecuted Communist Party of Iran, encouraged Reza in his task of national unification and modernization. The communists treated Reza Khan as they had treated Kemal in Turkey—approving the progressive character of his forceful measures, and tolerating his ruthless brutality against the Iranian communists as a deplorable but necessary evil. When Reza Khan became Prime Minister (October 29, 1923), the Comintern praised him for his progressive and anti-imperialist orientation, and indicated that it expected him to deal mighty blows against British influence in the future. The communists’ favorable attitude towards Reza was to give way to disappointment and anger however, when after 1924 he set out on the road of reaction which was to lead him to the throne.³ But for the time being, Reza was classed among the true revolutionaries. In 1924 he showed no monarchist tendencies yet. His growing opposition against the Shah seemed to be motivated, not by the ambition of becoming the latter’s successor, but rather by a republican spirit. The real power was already in the hands of Reza. The Comintern interpreted the situation

² See L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. I, p. 430.

³ And to pro-Nazi sympathies, ten years later.

to mean that Reza Khan was carrying out a sort of democratic dictatorship, supported by the people and interpreting their will. A democratic dictatorship being incompatible with the traditional privileges of the Persian monarchy, the E.C.C.I. concluded that Iran was on the way toward a republic.⁴

In the meantime, the communist struggle for power over the nationalist masses continued in Indonesia. While the year 1922 had seen a successful collaboration of the Communists with the Sarekat Islam, the beginning of 1923 brought about a change. Tan Malaka had undoubtedly gauged the efficacy and power of the communist approach to the Islamic problem correctly. And it was precisely because this communist approach was so successful, and because the Islamic masses were willing to agree that the striking workers were "the executive committee of God on earth", that the conservative leadership of the Sarekat Islam decided to take an energetic anti-Bolshevik stand and to clean their party of its Red elements.

In February 1923, a congress of the Sarekat Islam held at Madivan brought the conflict between Islam and Communism into the open. The dynamic leader of the upper-class nationalists, Tjokroaminoto, launched an attack against the communist sections of the party, demanding that they clarify their attitude toward the Muslim religion. He reminded them that at previous congresses of the Sarekat Islam the principle of absolute party discipline had been established and that all sections had the duty to participate in all activities of the movement, including the religious aspects. Semaoen, representing the communist point of view against Tjokroaminoto, argued that the red sections of the Sarekat Islam were not obliged to defend Islam actively, but could, without breaking party discipline, maintain a neutral attitude toward religion. The religious majority of the congress refused to accept such reasoning, and Tjokroaminoto carried the day. The communists were placed before the choice of either agreeing to defend the Muslim religion, or ceasing to be members of the Sarekat Islam. Semaoen and his partisans had no choice but to leave the organization.⁵

The "united front from above", which Tan Malaka had advocated, had failed. No close collaboration with the nationalist leadership was possible. The Communist Party of Indonesia was therefore forced to try a new policy. A "united front from below" had to be established. The Communist Party must try to wrest the Muslim and nationalist masses away from the Sarekat Islam leadership and to prove to these masses that the Reds were the only truly consequent and uncompromising representatives of the idea of national emancipation. This new policy was decided upon at the Congress of Bandoeng, held by the C.P.I. at the beginning of March 1923. Not only the local sections of

⁴ A. Itkine, "La Perse s'achemine vers la République", *Correspondance Internationale*, June 17, 1924, p. 367.

⁵ See J. Th. P. Blumberger, *Le Communisme aux Indes Néerlandaises*, pp. 35-36.

the Communist Party itself but also the red, dissident sections of the Sarekat Islam sent delegates to the Congress. Semaoen spoke at length about the fundamental differences which existed between the Sarekat Islam and the Communist Party. The Congress decided to undertake large-scale agitation for a separate, Communist-led mass movement, and to condemn the hesitant and "opportunist" policy of the Sarekat Islam leaders.⁶ It was decided furthermore to unite the dissident red sections of the Sarekat Islam into a united movement, which would constitute the nucleus of a vast revolutionary people's party. This new mass party took the name of "Sarekat Rajat" (People's Party). The formation of such a united "red Sarekat Islam" was made easier by the fact that Tjokroaminoto and the other moderate nationalist leaders proceeded to expel all the dissident sections from the Sarekat Islam.

The Indonesian communists were thus temporarily thrown back into an ultra-revolutionary attitude, which did not really correspond to the decisions of the fourth congress of the International and which ran counter to Tan Malaka's doctrine on the collaboration with Pan-Islamism. Throughout the year 1923, the communist leaders, in their speeches and writings, waged a bitter warfare against both the Dutch and the Muslim moderates. Instead of seeking the union of all anti-imperialist forces for national liberation, they passed through a new phase of ultra-leftism. The intransigence of the moderate nationalists forced the communists to compete with the bourgeoisie instead of joining it in a tactical alliance. While the C.P.I. would probably have preferred to place all emphasis on the national question and to leave the social question for later, it was now obliged to deal with both questions at the same time. The "betrayal of the national revolution by the bourgeoisie", i.e. the nationalists' break with the extreme Left, had arrived more swiftly than Semaoen or Tan Malaka had anticipated. The communists of Indonesia had a chance to show the efficacy of their mass leadership during the spring and summer of 1923, when a new wave of strikes broke out. The slogans issued by the Communist Party on this occasion were directed as much against indigenous capital as against foreign imperialism. Again the Dutch government reacted with vigor, arresting several revolutionary leaders.

In regard to Turkey, the Comintern continued the line which had been established in previous years: agitating against Kemalist repression of the Left and attempting to take the leadership of the working masses away from the nationalists, while at the same time giving critical support to Kemal in all instances in which he seemed to take a stand against the great powers. The various isolated communist groups which had existed in Turkey ever since 1920, were finally united, after the fourth congress, into a single Communist Party of Turkey. The Turkish communists concentrated their main attention on the labor movement. Several sporadic strikes broke out in the course of the year

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

1923 under red leadership, and in the autumn of the same year a Turkish general labor federation was founded, under communist control.⁷ The Kemalist government arrested a number of revolutionary leaders, who were, however, acquitted by the courts. The Communist Party of Turkey was thus carrying on a double activity—social agitation inside the country, combined with national agitation which intended to drive the government into a more anti-British and anti-French attitude. Seeing the growth of the communist movement in Turkey, the E.C.C.I. decided, in March 1924, to establish a special commission for Turkish affairs. This commission, in a report on the situation in Turkey, recommended an ever-growing emphasis on trade union organization and agitation.⁸ The Communist International, instead of launching violent verbal attacks against the Turkish government on account of its policy of anti-red repression, phrased its objections in a plaintive and warning form. The communists warned Ankara that counter-revolution was raising its ugly head and that, in order to fight this menace successfully, the revolutionary bourgeoisie must win the proletarian and peasant masses to its side. "Our opinion is that, if the governing democratic bourgeoisie does not carry out a decided *rapprochement* with the popular masses, it may suffer bitter setbacks in the near future".⁹ Certain actions of the Turkish government received the highest praise from the Comintern. Thus the abolition of the Califate, at the beginning of 1924, was greeted with exclamations of joy by the communist leaders. Roy wrote that the abolition of the Califate was an event of the highest historical importance. It meant a separation of Islam nationalism from its old-fashioned religious and theocratic basis. Turkey, according to Roy, had sent to all Muslims of the world a clear message: national emancipation cannot take place within a religious framework! A new era seemed to be opening in the history of the Muslim world.¹⁰

The Communist Party of Palestine, which up to this time had been rather insignificant, began to show signs of progress. Up to the end of 1923, there had only been isolated communist groups, very vaguely united into a federal league. In the autumn of 1923, this provisional league was transformed into a tightly-knit party, and the E.C.C.I. founded a Palestinian commission. The commission, after an investigation, reported that the Jewish workers in Palestine were growing more and more "class-conscious" and were gradually abandoning their old attitude of subservience to the bourgeois Zionists. For the first time, in 1923, a substantial group of communists had been elected into the council of the *Histraduth*, the trade union organization. The commission regretted that the work of the Palestinian communists was irregular—much more ad-

⁷ Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Exekutive der K.I. vom IV. bis V. Weltkongress, p. 57.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁹ P. Kitaigorodsky, "La contre-révolution turque relevait la tête", *Correspondance Internationale*, March 12, 1924, p. 186.

¹⁰ M.N. Roy, "L'abolition du Khalifat", *Correspondance Internationale*, March 19, 1924, p. 192.

vanced among the Jews than among the Arabs. The Palestinian Communist Party at that moment was almost exclusively Jewish. The E.C.C.I. decided that a very determined effort must be made to draw the Arab masses of Palestine into the party. The Jewish communists of Palestine, according to the E.C.C.I. commission's report, must wholeheartedly support the Arab nationalist struggle against British rule and against bourgeois Zionism. Jews and Arabs must unite in a movement for the creation of a single strong Palestine, independent of both English and Zionist "imperialists".¹¹ On the basis of this program it can be understood how absolute and final the break between the Comintern and the Poale Zion must henceforth be.

In April and May, 1924, bloody events took place in France's Syrian mandate. Sections of the Arab population rioted in protest against new taxes, and nationalist, anti-French sentiment rose high. The French authorities undertook very severe repressive measures. Blood flowed in Damascus and in the desert. The E.C.C.I. issued a proclamation, "Against French Imperialism! For the People of Syria" on May 11. The proclamation exhorted all revolutionary workers of the world to demand Syrian independence.¹²

In Egypt, the Communist Party, reorganized after the fourth congress of the International, made progress. During the spring of 1923, a wave of strikes, led by the extreme Left, broke out. These strikes were suppressed with strong measures by the government. Zaglul, the leader of the nationalists, in whom the Comintern had placed high hopes as an eventual anti-imperialist fighter, sorely disappointed the Reds by repressing the Communist Party with brutal energy. Even though the E.C.C.I. complained bitterly about this policy, it did not go as far as to condemn Zaglul entirely. Like Kemal, Zaglul might still embark on a path of intensive anti-British struggle, in which case the Communist International would be on his side. The communist policy for the time being must consist, like in Turkey, in trying to gain control of the masses, and to "expose" Zaglul's hesitations, but in being nevertheless ready to support him critically in the event of a national liberation fight which would have the character of a bourgeois revolution.¹³

c. South Africa, India, and the Far East.

The Communist Party of South Africa reported that steps had been taken in the direction of common organization and action between white and colored workers. While in the past the race difference had constituted a gap that seemed impossible to bridge, the South African communists now saw the situation in a more optimistic light. Cases of common organization at the trade union level were becoming more frequent. The South African C.P. hoped to unite Negroes, White, Cape

¹¹ *Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Exekutive*, p. 59.

¹² *Correspondance Internationale*, May 21, 1924, p. 302.

¹³ *Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Exekutive*, pp. 59-60.

Colored and Indians in a common struggle which should have at the same time a national (anti-British) and a social (anti-capitalist) character. Since most large South African capitalists were of British origin and language, it seemed indeed that such an objective should not be too difficult to realize.¹⁴

During the years 1923 and 1924, the E.C.C.I. continued to look at India with an eager eye. India being economically one of the most advanced of the underdeveloped countries, with a rather numerous proletariat, the International expected it to break out into open rebellion sooner than any other Asian land. The E.C.C.I. felt that in India the period of collaboration with the whole bourgeoisie was over. The upper strata of the bourgeoisie, politically represented by the right and middle wings of the Congress Party, was judged to have already "betrayed" the national revolution. The E.C.C.I.'s India commission reported with glee that the first wave of mass unrest, led by the Congress Party, had completely subsided since 1922.¹⁵ Analyzing the political situation inside the Congress Party itself, the E.C.C.I. decided that the right wing and the left wing of this party were drifting farther and farther apart. In Marxist class terms, this seemed to indicate, that while the upper bourgeoisie was betraying the national cause and linking its interests to that of the imperialists, the petty bourgeoisie continued to be revolutionary. Even though the Comintern felt that the petty bourgeoisie (the Congress Left) could still contribute to the success of the national liberation struggle, it decided, nevertheless, that the time for tactical alliance with the Congress Party was over, and that a new revolutionary people's party must be created. This people's party would have the purpose of uniting the social-national struggle of the proletarians and peasants with the national movement of the petty bourgeoisie. Aside from this people's party, however, the Indian communists must also create a pure proletarian class party, able to constitute the revolutionary nucleus and the vanguard of the broader, less clearly delimited people's party.¹⁶ Aside from the two objectives of a) constituting themselves as a proletarian party, and b) building a broad people's party, composed of workers, peasants and petty bourgeois, around the proletarian nucleus, the E.C.C.I. assigned the Indian communists a third task: to achieve undisputed control of the trade union movement. Thus India, the most advanced of the colonies, would be ready to proceed with her national revolution on the basis of proletarian leadership. This general strategy would be conducted on the basis of a triangular tactical structure: The Communist Party of India would be the angle at which the national struggle of the people's party and the social struggle of the trade unions met. Fusing these forces into a common movement,

¹⁴ In this as in other similar cases, the communists under-estimated the middle classes' capacity for independent action, and the resiliency of the capitalist system.

¹⁵ *Bericht ueber die...*, p. 61.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

the communists would thus use the vast peasant and petty-bourgeois reserves to defeat the national oppressor, and then to go as soon as possible into the next phase of revolution: the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This evaluation, current before the fifth Congress, was based essentially on reports by M. N. Roy. These reports failed to convince some of the men in Moscow. Especially Stalin did not share Roy's pessimism regarding the attitude of the Indian nationalist bourgeoisie. But Roy was convinced that nothing could be done by attempting to work with the Swaraj party or the National Congress. He was basing himself on the fact that the Swaraj (Right-wing nationalists) were slowly but surely gaining power within the National Congress, often making their views prevail over those of Gandhi and his followers. Many Swarajists were favorable to the idea of working with the British, provided that India obtained Dominion status within the Empire. The consequence of this could only be, Roy concluded, that the small bourgeoisie and peasants would be driven to accept proletarian leadership, and that the social revolution would develop parallelly to national liberation.¹⁷

The Comintern pointed to the agrarian reform movements which had broken out among the Sikh peasants as a possible mass basis for the people's party. The Indian communists went into action and succeeded in establishing local people's parties in several provinces, before even the communist groups themselves had been consolidated into a single party.¹⁸ There were local communist groups in Bombay, in Calcutta, in Madras, in various small localities in the countryside, but even the organizing ability and intellectual strength of an M. N. Roy had as yet been unable to weld them together.

China, the country which was destined to become for several years the one central focus of the Comintern's attention, almost to the exclusion of everything else, received relatively little attention from the E.C.C.I. between the fourth and the fifth congress. The Chinese commission of the E.C.C.I. reported that the situation was slowly developing in an objectively progressive manner, that the forces of democratic national revolution were growing, but it did not foresee the terrific social and political upheaval which was to overcome China within the year that followed the fifth congress. According to the E.C.C.I.'s Chinese commission, a gradual polarization of the forces of revolution and counter-revolution was taking place in the Celestial Empire. On the one hand, the commission saw a noticeable growth and consolidation of Chinese capitalism. The feudal landowning class was linking up its interests with those of foreign Capital and of a section of the Chinese bourgeoisie. Ever since 1922 the role of American capital seemed to be growing, slowly replacing British capital in various parts of the

¹⁷ M.N. Roy, "Les aspects nouveaux du nationalisme hindou", *Correspondance internationale*, February 6, 1924, p. 92.

¹⁸ *Bericht ueber die...*, p. 61.

country.¹⁹ The Comintern foresaw an impending offensive of the capitalist bloc against the forces of national liberation and democracy. It did not, however, analyse the Chinese situation in the same terms as that of India. While the International considered India a colony of the very most advanced type, in which the bourgeoisie had already passed over to the imperialist side, leaving only the petty bourgeoisie, the peasants and the proletariat on the side of revolution, it looked at China as a socially more backward area. Even though an offensive of imperialist capital, aided by the feudal class and by a part of the bourgeoisie, was supposedly about to take place, the majority of the Chinese middle class still remained democratic and patriotic, in the view of the E.C.C.I.²⁰

In opposition to the impending offensive of Capital, the International saw a strengthening of the revolutionary spirit of the Kuomintang. This evaluation was based on the Kuomintang's congress of January 1924. On the occasion of that congress, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, ideologically influenced by the communists, clearly stated that the purely military conquest of China would not be sufficient. In order to win an overall victory for the Three People's Principles it would be necessary to stir the great peasants' and workers' masses into action. The congress had elected various communists—who had joined the Kuomintang individually—to leading positions. Under their influence, resolutions had been taken in favor of broad mass agitation, and of a policy of friendship with the Soviet Union.

The Chinese Communist Party remained numerically very small (only 600 members in 1923)²¹ but it was growing rapidly, and its policy of joining the Kuomintang individually was successful. The same policy which in Java had failed—because of the religious fervor of the Islamic leaders—worked very well in the case of the agnostic Kuomintang nationalists. Another factor which at this stage made fruitful collaboration between Chinese communists and nationalists possible, was precisely the fact that the Chinese communists were much less numerous than those of Indonesia, and that the nationalist leaders need not yet have any fear of being dominated or “used” by them. While the Chinese Communist Party was outlawed in Northern and Central China, it was perfectly legal in the South, under Dr. Sun's jurisdiction. If the Doctor was disturbed by the fact that the communist nucleus in the ranks of his own party held separate meetings and established a separate program of its own, he did not show it.

The E.C.C.I., in the course of the years 1923-1924 had worked out a definite program for the Communist Party of Korea. The situation in Korea was different from that of the British or French colonies in that

¹⁹ Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Exekutive..., p. 66.

²⁰ In the Comintern's evaluation of the Indian bourgeoisie as a counter-revolutionary force, Roy and his theory of “decolonization” probably played an important role.

²¹ Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Exekutive..., p. 67.

the rule of the Japanese occupants was so brutal and oppressive as to unite all classes of the Korean nation in a common desire for emancipation. There was no danger in Korea of the upper classes' passing into the camp of the oppressor. The E.C.C.I.'s instructions therefore assigned the Korean Communists the task of working for the national union of all Koreans in a single national liberation movement. At the same time, mindful of Lenin's warning that the alliance with the democratic bourgeoisie must never go as far as to make the communists lose their separate identity, the Comintern instructed its Korean section to organize a proletarian class movement parallel to the national liberation front. This proletarian class movement should wholeheartedly support the united struggle for national liberation, but should at the same time define its own class interests and prepare itself for the time when the phase of social struggle within the nation should begin. The Korean Communist Party failed to understand these instructions, and for the time being hesitated between the "right deviation" of merging with the bourgeois national movement, and the "left deviation" of advocating an immediate sectarian class struggle of the proletariat.²²

d. *The Americas.*

Ever since the fourth congress, the Comintern had become fully aware of the national problem in Latin America and the race question in the United States, and had extended its general national-colonial strategy to these areas. The Workers' (Communist) Party of the United States displayed a growing awareness of the revolutionary potentialities of the Negroes on the one hand, and of the colonial and underdeveloped areas of the American continent on the other. The situation of American-dominated territories such as the Philippines also attracted their attention. During the years 1923-1924, the American Workers' Party passed resolutions, and organized demonstrations in favor of complete national independence for the Philippines. American communists made contact with Filipino nationalists and sought to establish a common strategic and tactical plan.

The American communists became increasingly active in regard to the Negro problem. In February 1924 a general race conference of colored people took place in Chicago. In accordance with the resolutions of the fourth congress of the Comintern, the Workers' Party had undertaken an energetic recruiting campaign among colored workers, and had in particular established friendly relations with the radical "African Blood Brotherhood". At the Chicago congress, communist members of the "African Blood Brotherhood" proposed various resolutions tending to link up the struggle of the colored people for equal rights with the social battle against capitalism. These resolutions "were rejected by the petty bourgeois elements, but at least we succeeded in raising the social question among the Negroes for the

²² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

first time, and to have it discussed, with reference to the Workers' Party, in the whole Negro press".²³

Latin America was beginning to play an important rôle, analogous to that of the Asiatic and African colonies. Strangely enough, the Comintern never fully included Latin America in the "Eastern" or "national-colonial" question, but persisted in treating it as a subject apart, even though the social and political situation of most of the Latin American republics was very similar to that of countries like India, China or Egypt.

According to the degree of evolution of the Latin American countries, the communist parties were assigned different tasks. The communists of Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, where a large modern proletariat existed, placed their greatest emphasis on the social struggle. Comintern strategy in these countries tended to complete the bourgeois democratic revolution and then to pass on to the dictatorship of the proletariat, with the workers, peasants and sections of the petty bourgeoisie constituting the revolutionary forces. In less developed countries, like Mexico, Central America, Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Paraguay, Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, as well as in Puerto Rico, the question of a national emancipation struggle against the direct or indirect rule of "Yankee imperialism" was placed in the forefront.

The Communist Party of Mexico developed strongly during the years 1923 to 1924. The counter-revolutionary troubles of that period, the obvious collusion between feudal warlords and North American business interests, worked powerfully in favor of the communists. The Mexican peasant was threatened by the unholy alliance of agrarian-clerical reaction with foreign interests. Disillusioned by cases of hesitation or corruption on the part of the democratic politicians, annoyed by the slowness with which the land reform was being carried out, the peón began to turn more and more toward communism. Communists had frequently led guerrilla groups against the counter-revolutionary forces and had proved the sincerity of their political creed. Thus it came about that the Mexican communists were more successful in the countryside than in the towns. Among the Indian peasants they could base themselves on the ideal of the ancient communal ownership of land by the villages. They could appear as the direct executors of the will of the great and beloved Emiliano Zapata. In the towns, on the other hand, they met with the opposition of the moderately socialistic radicals, as well as the anarcho-syndicalists, both of whom exerted a determining influence on Mexican organized labor. Faced with the radical and anarchist influence on the one hand, and the backwardness of the Indians on the other, the Mexican Communist Party had difficulty in establishing a coherent program. During the summer of 1923, the

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

E.C.C.I. admonished the Mexican section to revise its tactics.²⁴ The Mexican party, according to the E.C.C.I., was guilty of right-wing opportunist deviations. It had misunderstood the tactics of the united front with the bourgeois democrats, in so far as it had frequently subordinated itself unquestioningly to the leadership of the latter, instead of keeping its own separate identity. On the other hand, they had yielded to the anti-political, anarchist influence in some cases. Mindful of the E.C.C.I.'s letter, the Mexican party tightened its discipline and expelled a number of "petty-bourgeois-anarchist elements". Among the organized workers they continued to have but little success. Only the petroleum workers followed the communist line to a certain extent. On the other hand, the communists swayed the peasantry with the slogan: "The peasants' only guarantee of ownership of their land are the arms they carry."²⁵ The party agitated for the arming of all peasants, for the suppression of the regular army and for its replacement by a peasants' militia.

The young Communist Party of Brazil, founded shortly before the fourth Congress and admitted to the Comintern as a "sympathizing member", sent a delegation to Moscow at the end of 1923, requesting definite admission to the International. Unhampered by any competition—Brazil had neither social-democrats nor anarchists—the Communist Party quickly achieved a strong hold on the workers and on certain sections of the peasants. Even though it functioned illegally, it was active and growing. The E.C.C.I. therefore decided to recommend the Communist Party of Brazil, for definite admission, to the fifth congress of the International.²⁶

During the summer of 1923, the Guatemalan group "Unificación Obrera Socialista" decided to unite with other Central American revolutionaries and to form a Communist Party of Central America. The E.C.C.I. took cognizance of the existence of this new party, and sent it a set of tactical instructions. The instructions simply exhorted the Central American communists to fight "against the oppressive rule of American imperialism and for the union of the revolutionary workers' and peasants' movements of the Central American countries".²⁷

e. *The Balkans.*

During the period situated between the fourth and fifth congresses, a set of national problems became acute in Europe. The Comintern became aware of the fact that the non-European territories were not the only ones in which the question of national revolution remained acute. In the Balkans, too, extremely explosive conflicts existed. Of the Balkan problems, that of Macedonia was the most crucial. Divided

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

into a Greek and a Yugoslav part, Macedonia was showing signs of an independent national consciousness of her own. The question of Thrace was also important, as well as that of national minorities in Yugoslavia and Rumania. Following the fourth congress, the Comintern had founded a Communist Balkan Federation, of which the Greek, Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Rumanian parties were members. The Balkan Federation held a conference in February and March 1924, during which the national problems of this region were examined.

Regarding Macedonia and Thrace, the conference passed a resolution advocating autonomy for both regions. The resolutions did not go as far as to advocate complete independence, since such a demand would be utopian within the framework of bourgeois rule. It is also probable that the parties of the countries concerned would have raised some objections to such a demand. The resolution in favor of Macedonian and Thracian autonomy called on all workers and peasants of the Balkans to support the struggle of these regions' nationalists.²⁸ This task was defined as urgent not only because the principle of self-determination was involved, but also because the various powers might try to exploit the nationalism of the Balkan minorities for aggressive purposes. As long as Macedonia and Thrace remained in oppression, danger of war existed in the South-East of Europe.²⁹ The resolution went on to say that the Balkan communists must try to make the masses understand that the "bourgeois agrarians and adventurers" who were leading the autonomy movements were not capable of carrying them to a successful conclusion. Only a broad mass movement of the workers and peasants would be able to achieve the national aims of the Macedonian and Thracian minorities. The demand for the emancipation of Macedonia and Thrace must be combined with the slogans of land reform, and of a Balkan federation governed by a democratic and republican workers' and peasants' regime.³⁰

The Balkan Federation also discussed the question of the national minorities in Greece. First of all, there were the Bulgarian and Albanian minorities, which lacked the right of national cultural autonomy. Secondly, there was the serious question of the Turkish minority, which was being forcibly removed to Turkey, according to a population exchange agreement with Kemal. The Communist Balkan Federation decided that the Greek party must do everything in its power to fight the policy of national oppression and of forcible population transfer within their own country. In order to achieve this, the Greek communists must fortify their organizational bond with the communists of the oppressed minorities.³¹

The Rumanian Communist Party was assigned a complicated task. It must support the national aspirations of the Hungarian, German,

²⁸ *Correspondance internationale*, March 19, 1924, p. 199.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

³¹ *Ibid.*, April 2, 1924, p. 220.

Ukrainian, and Bulgarian minorities. At the same time it must warn the masses of these groups against the "treacherous" policy of their own bourgeoisie and aristocracy, and "expose" the falsehood of the Social Democrats. It must lead the Rumanian workers and peasants in a struggle for the right of independence of all subject nationalities, including the right of complete secession. If complete secession should not be possible or desirable, a large measure of cultural, economic and political autonomy must at least be advocated.³² As an overall ideal to be reached as soon as possible, the party should propose the equality and autonomy of all nationalities inhabiting Rumania and the rest of the Balkans in a Federation of democratic workers' and peasants' republics.³³ The Comintern's interest in the Rumanian minorities' right of self-determination was partly dictated by the Soviet Union's irredentism in regard to the Ukrainian-inhabited territory of Bessarabia.

Similar instructions were issued to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The party must carry on an active struggle against the hegemony of the Serbian bourgeoisie over the Croats and Slovenes. But while fighting for the national rights of Croats and Slovenes, the communists must at the same time "expose" the clerical-reactionary character of these underprivileged nationalities' leaders. The party should not only fight for the right of self-determination of the Croats and Slovenes, but it should at the same time demand the abolition of the monarchy and the transformation of Yugoslavia into a democratic republic. This program should be carried into effect through the action of the toiling masses, since the Croatian and Serbian bourgeoisie were much too hesitant and reactionary for such a task.³⁴

The program of the Communist Balkan Federation can thus be summed up as follows: Struggle for the national autonomy or independence of the oppressed nationalities, on the basis, not of a democratic revolution of the national bourgeoisie, as in Asia, but rather of a democratic workers' and peasants' revolution. This workers' and peasants' revolution would solve all national problems in the framework of a Balkan Federation of democratic workers' and peasants' republics. This Federation would in its turn constitute the necessary basis for the next phase of development: the socialist phase.

2. THE FIFTH CONGRESS.

It can be said that, while the period of the first and second congresses had been a period of worldwide revolutionary stirrings and of "Western" orientation, and while the period stretching from the second to the fourth congress was one of strategic retreat in the West and of national-revolutionary progress in the East, the years following the fourth Congress were essentially years of organization and "bolsheviza-

³² *Ibid.*, p. 222.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Correspondance internationale*, April 30, 1924, p. 276.

tion". Ever since 1921 the Comintern had moved farther and farther away from its original Western-proletarian orientation. The power of resistance of Western capitalism had led the International to strive, not for a single worldwide revolution, but for a successive series of national revolutions. These national revolutions were most likely to occur at the points of least resistance of capitalism, i.e., in the countries where, as yet, no strong modern centralized state was able to crush uprisings by force, and where the nationalist and democratic stirrings of the middle class could be used as a battering-ram against foreign rule and against feudalism. Thus the Comintern, under the leadership of Lenin, had turned Eastward in its orientation. The "second alternative" of Lenin's theses on the national and colonial question—that of tactical alliance with the bourgeoisie—became the only practical and practicable policy.

The close ties between world communism and Asian or African nationalism reinforced the "Oriental", despotic tendencies inside Russia, who had grown into the International's undisputed dictator. At the time of the fourth congress, Russian control of the Comintern had not yet meant "monolithic" unanimity. As in Russian internal affairs, various trends of thought had continued to clash freely. Between 1922 and 1924, however, the Stalin group had risen to a position of predominance, which enabled it to carry out a gradual suppression of all oppositional groups. The opposition could still speak—but it was certain to be overruled, regardless of objective right or wrong. This state of affairs openly manifested itself at the fifth congress of the Comintern.

a. *Preliminary Speeches.*

The fifth congress of the Comintern, which met under the sign of centralization and discipline, was held at Moscow from June 17 to July 8, 1924. In regard to the national-colonial question, it was determined to continue the line of the third and fourth congresses—on in the direction of tactical alliance with bourgeois nationalists—but it added a new element to this policy: the element of iron discipline, of revolution from above. The Eastern orientation was clear. Much attention was devoted to the national and colonial question. But there was an even greater attempt than at the fourth congress to define the policy exactly in all its details.

The presidium of the congress was by no means homogeneous in ideology. Both "Eastern" and "Western" minds were represented on it: Trotsky on the one hand, Stalin, Bukharin, Thaelmann on the other.

The presence of Trotsky only served to veil the fact, however, that the Stalin group completely controlled the congress. Zinoviev, who formerly had been of the Left, had joined Stalin for reasons of Russian internal politics. The same was true of Bukharin, who was passing from left Bolshevism to the very opposite position, taking a more "right-wing" stand in the national question than even Stalin himself.

The importance of the national and colonial question appeared clearly at the very first session, when the congress' proclamation to the workers of the world was to be adopted. Ho Chi-Minh (Nguyen Ai-Quoc)³⁵ moved that the words "and to the colonial peoples" be added to the title of the proclamation. This motion was adopted unanimously.³⁶

At the fifth congress, the discussion on the national question did not deal exclusively with the East and the colonies, but with the national problems of Eastern Europe and the Negro problem as well. Three separate committees were therefore set up to deal with the matter. The committee charged with the work on the national question in Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Balkans was composed of Manuilsky (U.S.S.R.), Walecky (Poland), and Boshkovitch (Yugoslavia). The East and the colonies were dealt with by a committee made up of Roy (India), Katayama (Japan), and Ching (China). Dunne (U.S.A.) and Ferand (France) were charged with the task of reporting on the Negro problem in America and Africa.³⁷

The keynote for the whole congress was sounded by Zinoviev in his report on the activities of the E.C.C.I. The chairman of the International maintained that the period of capitalist counter-offensive was over. The bourgeois world had entered a "pacifist" phase. Capitalism was resorting to liberalism and social reform. According to Zinoviev, this phase only indicated a desire on the part of the ruling classes to fool and mislead the workers. Social-democracy had come to be a complete servant of the bourgeoisie, corrupting the workers by talk of moderation and gradual reform. "The bourgeoisie in Europe is forced to seek a hold sometimes in fascism and sometimes in social democracy", said Zinoviev. While fascism is the "right hand" of the bourgeoisie, social democracy is its "left hand".³⁸ In time of crisis, the bourgeoisie would use fascism as its weapon, and in time of national and social peace, social democracy. The duty of communists during this pacifist phase would lie in "exposing" the social democrats, in fighting the liberal, reformist illusions of the working class, and in leading it into revolutionary action. The capitalist counter-offensive was over. A new revolutionary onslaught could begin.

This analysis did not imply, however, that a new revolutionary offensive should be launched in Europe, on the proletarian front. In rather meant that the revolutionary effort in the East should be intensified.

The Eastern delegates did not wait until the national and colonial question was officially opened for discussion. They felt that every single topic on the congress' agenda had some bearing on their countries.

³⁵ For the sake of convenience we shall henceforth call him by his later, generally familiar name of Ho Chi-Minh.

³⁶ *Protokoll des Fuenften Kongresses der K.I.*, p. 29.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

M. N. Roy, who had continued to develop his own very original patterns of ideas, rose to speak on the general world situation and declared that the British Empire was the vital center of world affairs. England is the center of imperialism, Roy said. In order to combat this master imperialism successfully, it would be necessary to improve and expand the British Communist Party enormously. The traditional attitude of that party consisted in devoting most of its attention to the British domestic scene. Nothing could be more incorrect. The British Communist Party must not limit itself to being the revolutionary party of England and Scotland. It must become the revolutionary party of the whole Empire. By penetrating every nook and corner of that vast empire, by establishing close relations with every other revolutionary group within the realm, it must pass from the stage of local, national communism to that of "imperial communism".³⁹

Roy's insistence on the primacy of the colonial issue, on the need to think not in terms of Europe but of the vast lands across the seas, was echoed by Ho Chi-Minh. During the eighth session of the congress, while a heated discussion was going on about the causes of the German communists' failure in Saxony, the Vietnamese delegate suddenly intervened most forcefully and even rudely. He was obviously bored and annoyed by the endless bickering between the Left and the Right of the German Communist Party. Europe was a secondary matter to him. He boldly expressed the idea that Asia had become the vital center of world revolution and that Europe had passed from the center to the periphery.

"I am here in order constantly to draw the attention of the International to the existence of the colonies, and to say that for the revolution there is a colonial danger as well as a colonial future. I feel that the comrades have not yet sufficiently grasped the idea that the destiny of the proletariat of the whole world, and especially that of the proletariat of the colonies, is closely tied to the destiny of the oppressed nations in the colonies. Since this is so, I shall seize every occasion that offers itself, or, if necessary, provoke occasions, to point out to you the importance of the colonial question."⁴⁰ The colonies, Ho Chi-Minh argued, constitute the principal source of strength of the capitalist powers. As long as it dominates colonies, capitalism cannot be defeated! "So why do you neglect the colonies, on which capitalism leans in order to defend itself and to fight you?"⁴¹ Ho analyzed the sources of strength which the bourgeoisie possesses to defend itself against revolution. He concluded that there are basically two ways in which the ruling classes can hope to crush social insurrections. For the countries which do not own any colonies, fascism is the typical means of counter-revolution. But some countries do not need to transform their inner structure in a fascist way in order to defend capitalist rule.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150-51.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

They have other sources of power. "I believe that reaction in Italy, Germany and some other countries needs fascism for its defense, but that French reaction does not need it. It has defenders who are stronger, and better organized and disciplined than the Black Shirts. It has black and yellow mercenary soldiers." ⁴²

Ho Chi-Minh had launched a powerful offensive against the remnants of Westernism in the International. After him, during the sessions which followed, one colonial delegate after the other took the floor to echo Ho's words, to point out the vital importance of their countries, and to criticize Zinoviev for not having paid sufficient attention, in his report, to the colonial and semi-colonial world. They also criticized Eugene Varga, who in his report on the world economic situation, had likewise focussed his attention on the technically developed West. Varga had mentioned that Europe had ceased to be the economic center of the world, and that America was becoming the economic heartland. But he had said little about Asia.

The old fighter Sen Katayama (Japan) pointed out Varga's omission. While it is true that the center of capitalism is moving from Europe to America, he said, it is also true that new capitalist units have arisen in Asia—not only Japan, but also China and India. ⁴³

Semaoen complained about the insufficiency of the attention paid by the Dutch party to the colonial problem. The aid proffered by the Dutch party to its Indonesian comrades is paper help, Semaoen explained. It is purely theoretical and immaterial. He added that he hoped that the fifth congress would energetically demand an intensification of the European communists' participation in the anticolonial fight. ⁴⁴

The same note was sounded by the Mexican delegate Wolfe. Against the tendency of certain old-fashioned European Marxists to ignore the underdeveloped countries, he quoted the American communist leader Pepper: "We have the mission, at least to begin the bolshevization of whole continents." ⁴⁵ Wolfe agreed with Varga in that the center of capitalism now lay in the Western hemisphere. That fact naturally conferred a growing importance on the Latin American "colonies" of the U.S.A. "I wish to call your attention to the fact that under certain conditions the European proletariat can find a powerful ally in the struggle of Latin America against North American imperialism." ⁴⁶ Zinoviev was guilty of a grave omission by failing to mention the importance of Latin America, Wolfe insisted. If the United States have become the center of capitalism then the most important task of all must be to attack and destroy that bastion of reaction. But American capitalism would stand firm, Wall Street would retain its power, as long as the large Latin American market was open to American business.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 237.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 379-380.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 384-385.

⁴⁵ Re-translated from the German text.

⁴⁶ *Protokoll des Fuenften Kongresses...*, p. 390.

Wolfe explained that the United States would always be ready to use the most ruthless methods in order to keep their Latin American markets open. For a long time the North Americans had constantly intervened in the internal affairs of their Southern neighbors and set up dictators who were docile tools in the hands of Wall Street, and who kept the Latin American peoples in submission. Just as Roy blamed the British Communist Party and Ho Chi-Minh the French Communist Party for not paying sufficient attention to the struggle of their colonial brothers, Wolfe reproached the Communist Party of the United States with neglecting Latin American affairs. The North American communists are ignorant in regard to Latin America, he charged. They do not know that national-democratic revolutions against United States imperialism will probably break out in various Latin American countries in the near future. "The autocracies of Venezuela and Peru are faced with a revolutionary situation. Even now, in spite of the fact that I left Latin America more than a month ago, I am almost sure that the revolution which was being planned... in Venezuela will break out in the near future, if it has not broken out already." Wolfe concluded with the biting remark that bourgeois liberals much as La Follette and Borah were better informed about Latin America than the American communists, who failed to fight even for the most elementary democracy in Latin America.⁴⁷

b. *Manuilsky's Report.*

After those preliminary speeches, which indicated the extent to which the communists of the underdeveloped countries had become conscious of their importance, the discussion of the national and colonial question proper appeared on the agenda of the twentieth session of the Congress. The overall report on the matter was presented by Manuilsky, who was a faithful follower of Stalin.

Manuilsky began by stating that the importance of the national and colonial question was growing from year to year, and that national revolutionary situations had arisen in two parts of the world: on the one hand in the Balkans, and on the other hand in the Asiatic and African colonial countries. He pointed to various events which indicated national-revolutionary effervescence: a month-long strike of the textile workers in Bombay, peasant revolts in the interior of India, unrest among the national minorities of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Poland, Rumania.⁴⁸

In all attempts to solve the national-colonial question, Manuilsky contended, the example of Soviet Russia must always be kept in mind. While the second congress of the International could only come to very general theoretical conclusions, it was now possible to "base oneself on

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 620-21.

the rich experience of the Russian *Leninist-Stalinist* school regarding the treatment of the national question".⁴⁹

The second congress, Manuilsky continued, had to deal with two basic questions: 1) to what extent can the international proletariat use national movements in the interest of world revolution; and, 2) "to what extent the colonial peoples, basing themselves on effective support on the part of the international proletariat, will be able to avoid the capitalist phase of development..." Aside from treating these two basic questions, the second congress had not been able to work out a full program for the colonies. The question of the forms which collaboration between the proletariat and the oppressed nations might assume had only been touched very superficially. Manuilsky insisted that the time had come to continue and complete the work of the second congress. The new problems, which had arisen since 1920, could be classed in four categories: a) The question of peasant-worker parties; b) the question of the Near East; c) who is the carrier of the right of self-determination? d) the question of irredentism. Manuilsky's analysis of these four problems is quite important because it constitutes a summary of Stalin's views. On the basis of this summary it becomes apparent, on the one hand, in which matters Stalin modified the Leninist theory, and, on the other hand, where Stalin entered into conflict with the "Westernizers" such as Trotsky.

Regarding the first point, the question of workers'-peasants' parties, Manuilsky explained that by that term he meant parties like the Sarekat Rajat or the Kuomintang, or pure peasant parties such as the Croatian Republican Party of Raditch, with a "relatively radical program of struggle against imperialism".⁵⁰ Even though by and large the Leninist doctrine insisted on the organizational independence of the Communist Party, the E.C.C.I. had instructed the communists of Java to join the Sarekat Islam, and later the Sarekat Rajat, individually. The same had been decided for the Chinese Communists in regard to the Kuomintang. This tactics, according to Manuilsky, was highly fruitful. Nevertheless, at the last Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, the left wing had criticized the policy of individual membership in the Kuomintang very sharply, and had advocated a complete organizational separation from that body.

Manuilsky explained the difficulties and dangers raised by the existence of national-revolutionary parties.

"For our sections a double danger arises: either the danger of a nihilist indifference toward such new phenomena, which revolutionize the East, or the danger of a vulgar collaboration with the petty bourgeoisie and of the loss of an autonomous class character."⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 622. Regarding Lenin's evaluation of Stalin's treatment of the national question inside Russia, see above, p. 122.

⁵⁰ *Protokoll des Fuenften Kongresses*, p. 623.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 624.

It is of the utmost urgency for the International to decide how to meet this double danger, the speaker continued. There cannot be the slightest doubt as to the revolutionary importance of such peasants', workers' and petty bourgeois parties as the Kuomintang or the Sarekat Rajat. But should the Communist International merely support such parties in places where they already exist, or should it actually take the initiative to create them? Should the communists work for the formation of national-revolutionary multi-class parties?

Manuilsky went on to the second question he had raised: the Near East.

The Leninist theses of the second congress, he began, had clearly stated how the communists should behave toward the bourgeois revolutionaries who were trying to seize power. The answer was that the communists should give support to these bourgeois, in so far as the latter were carrying out a historically necessary and progressive task. But recent events had raised a new problem: how should the communists behave toward revolutionary bourgeois nationalists who had already succeeded in seizing power in their countries? This had happened in Turkey (Kemal) and in Egypt (Zaghlul). Should the communists continue to support the young victorious bourgeoisie, in order to defend it against feudal and imperialist counter-revolution, or should they immediately turn against it, in an attempt to lead the revolutionary struggle to the proletarian phase? Manuilsky felt that continued support of a victorious bourgeoisie was extremely dangerous. The rise to power of Zaghlul Pasha in Egypt was undoubtedly a progressive event. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that Zaghlul came to power with British consent. "The English government has solved the Egyptian problem of power through a 'reform from above', through the return of Zaghlul Pasha and through the handing over of the administration to him... In both cases [Egypt and Turkey] it is the beginning of the victory of the native bourgeoisie."⁵² The temptation was great for the communists to continue wholeheartedly supporting a young bourgeoisie which they had aided in its efforts to break the feudal bonds. This was particularly noticeable in Turkey, said Manuilsky. The Communist Party of Turkey had committed grievous rightist errors. The official organ of the party had written that the Communists must support the development of national capitalism against the competition of foreign capital.⁵³ Such a policy implied the postponement of the social struggle. It implied the subordination of the proletariat to the national bourgeoisie, a renunciation of the right to strike and to agitate for the proletarian revolution. It implied the adoption of a bourgeois "legal Marxism" comparable to that of Struve in Russia before the Revolution. It was true that the Communist Party of Turkey had changed its line, following

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 625. Our present-day communists are faced with the same problem in other cases in which there has been a "revolution by consent": India, Burma, Tunisia, the Gold Coast.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

an admonition from the E.C.C.I. But Manuilsky insisted that all others must take warning and strive with all their might to avoid similar mistakes. No Communist must allow himself "to confuse the interests of the development of the productive forces in the country with the development of the interests of Capital."⁵⁴

This admonition on the part of Manuilsky was extremely important. It touched on a problem that was, and that has continued to be, vital for communist tactics.

The third problem raised by Manuilsky was very significant: Who is the "carrier" of the right of self-determination of a given nation?

Stalin, with his Eastern background, and his profound awareness of the explosiveness of the underdeveloped countries, made the "Luxemburgism" of the "Lefts" one of his main points of argument. Manuilsky's presentation of this matter at the fifth congress was a feature of the beginning overall Stalinist offensive against the Trotskyist group. Though inside Russia Stalin defended self-determination of the "toilers" as against "bourgeois" self-determination, on the international front he attacked the Trotskyists for "Luxemburgist" neglect of the right of self-determination.

During the time of the occupation of the Ruhr, Manuilsky said, the German party was split into two tendencies, one of which deviated to the Right and the other to the Left. The left group said that the Ruhr occupation should not constitute any special matter for concern for the communists, and that the struggle against German capitalism should not be modified by the new factor of French occupation. "This was undoubtedly a wrong tendency, in which the influence of Rosa Luxemburg could be seen."⁵⁵ At the same time, however, Thalheimer and Brandler had fallen into the opposite error. Manuilsky omitted the fact that the E.C.C.I., and especially the permanently muddled Radek, had supported Brandler. Thalheimer and Brandler had preached an alliance with the Social Democrats and a national struggle against French imperialist oppression. Thalheimer, as Manuilsky now pointed out, had forgotten that Germany was an industrially advanced country. He had regarded it like an Eastern underdeveloped area, preaching an alliance between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. Actually, according to communist orthodoxy, that tactics could never be applied to an advanced country, where the stage of bourgeois-democratic revolution lay in the past. In Germany the proletarian revolution was the only possible future phase.

But Manuilsky reserved his sharpest criticism for the uncompromising left fraction, which committed an even "greater mistake". While Thalheimer had been wrong in seeking to apply the tactical formula of an underdeveloped country to Germany, the left had been terribly mistaken in seeking to apply the German formula to underdeveloped

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 626.

countries. Mistaking the bourgeois phase for the proletarian phase was even more disastrous than the opposite. According to Manuilsky, the German leftist Boris, in his attacks against Thalheimer's right deviation, "had been inclined to make the proletariat the carrier of the right of self-determination even in the colonies; to make the colonies' right to secession dependent on the previous establishment of socialist soviet republics in these colonies." ⁵⁶

This leads to the question of whether secession is possible within the framework of capitalism. Lenin had emphatically stated that it was indeed possible. He had pointed to the example of the secession of Norway from Sweden. But various communists still persisted in a Luxemburgist denial of this possibility. Manuilsky accused the Balkan communists of taking a Luxemburgist stand.

"Undoubtedly the bourgeoisie is not capable of solving the national question within the framework of the capitalist state", said Manuilsky. "But this does not mean that we have to postpone the realization of the oppressed nations' right to secession until the victory of the worldwide social revolution. It is enough to look at the resolutions of our Balkan comrades to realize that for them the right to secession has such a [mistaken] character. They make the right to secession dependent on the previous establishment of a Balkan federation of workers' and peasants' soviet republics.

"But what does such a condition signify? The Balkans are a vital center of the whole imperialist policy of the European great powers. The victory of the workers' and peasants' power in the Balkans would mean the victory of the international proletariat. To treat the question in this manner, therefore, means to avoid the urgent problems of the present moment." ⁵⁷

Manuilsky thus implied that the problem of national secession was of vital revolutionary significance, not only in the colonies and semi-colonies, but also in Europe. The only difference between the two cases might be, that in Europe a different phase of social development had been reached, and that the tactics of class alliances had to be different. But the basic principle of using national revolution as a battering-ram against imperialism must be observed in Europe as well as in Asia, Africa or South America.

Finally, Manuilsky spoke about his fourth question: irredentism. In which cases should the Communists support the irredentism of a nation which had sections of its population living within other states? The question must be posed on two different levels, said Manuilsky, There may be a case of irredentism between, on the one hand, a workers' and peasants' state and, on the other hand, a bourgeois state. In other cases, the irredentism may simply arise between two bourgeois states.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 627.

In the former case, where the irredentism of a workers' and peasants' state claims a kindred population enclosed in a neighboring bourgeois country, the communists should support such irredentism. The Polish, Estonian, and Carpatho-Russian communists had correctly decided to support the irredentist movement for the annexation of certain territories and populations to the Soviet motherland. The Soviet Union claimed the Ukrainian and Russian populations and territories which after the first world war had been enclosed in the new, formerly Russian, states. This claim must be supported, in the name of the self-determination of nations and of the interest of the workers' revolution.

In the latter case, in which the irredentist problem existed between two bourgeois states, the communists of the state which forcibly retains a foreign population under its rule must wholeheartedly support the irredentist aspirations. On the other hand, the communists of the irredentist nation must fight the chauvinism of their own bourgeoisie. The dual tactics developed by Lenin for all relationships between the communists of an oppressing and oppressed nation apply to this case as well. Manuilsky took up the case of the German irredentism in regard to the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia. The Czech and German Communist Parties had two distinct tasks in regard to this question.

The Czech communists had the duty of agitating for the Sudeten Germans' right to join Germany. The German communists, on the other hand, must fight the chauvinism of the German bourgeoisie, both in the Reich and in the Sudetenland, and to agitate for a fraternal alliance between the Slav and German workers in Czechoslovakia.

Unfortunately the Czech Communist Party failed to do its duty. In 1921, at its Reichenberg conference, it had voted against the Sudeten Germans' right to secession from Czechoslovakia. Their reasons were the following: the proletarian revolution would probably break out in Germany very soon; in Czechoslovakia later. The Sudeten Germans could make a useful contribution to the Czech revolution. Therefore they should remain within the Czech state.⁵⁸

In the same way, the Polish Communist Party had refused to recognize the right to secession of the German minority in Poland. The Rumanian communists refused to recognize the Hungarian minority's right to join Hungary. They agreed that the Hungarian minority inside Rumania should have the right to form an independent "Transylvanian Republic", but not to become a part of reactionary Hungary.⁵⁹ As Manuilsky explained, these refusals indicate "the fear that the right of self-determination might objectively become equivalent to support of a foreign bourgeois government".⁶⁰

Manuilsky agreed that there was some validity in these objections. He did not propose to condemn the attitude of the Czech, Polish and Ru-

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 627.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 628.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

manian communists in absolute terms. He recognized that in such intricate matters a great deal of "revolutionary suppleness" must be used.⁶¹ But he urged an intensive study of each one of the irredentist situations, and the adaptation of the various party lines to a policy consistent with the defense of the right of self-determination, as well as with the objective overall interests of the revolutionary movement.

Summing up the mistakes that had been committed by various communist parties in regard to the national question, Manuilsky pointed out four main kinds of errors: 1) "Austro-Marxist" deviations of the Bauer-Renner variety. 2) "Social-imperialist" mistakes such as the one committed by the French party's Sidi-bel-Abbes group. 3) "Luxemburgist" deviations. 4) The Turkish mistake, tending toward class alliance with the bourgeoisie even after the latter's triumph.

The "Austro-Marxist" theory of Bauer and Renner, advocating constitutional reform and national-cultural autonomy within the framework of a federal bourgeois state, had been taken up again by two Yugoslav communists, Markovitch and Mihailovitch. These two Yugoslav theoreticians had stated that the problem in Yugoslavia could basically be reduced to one of linguistic and cultural, rather than truly national, differences. Markovitch had proposed to agitate for a revision of the Yugoslav constitution, which would establish a federal relationship between linguistically, culturally and administratively autonomous nationalities. In regard to Macedonia, which was divided into a Serbian, a Greek and a Bulgarian part, Markovitch felt that this question was so intricate, and of such great importance to the whole of Europe, that it was impossible to fight for an immediate solution. The overall European workers' revolution alone would be able to solve the Macedonian problem.

Manuilsky insisted that this attitude, both in regard to the national situation inside Yugoslavia and to the particular case of Macedonia, constituted a "Bauerist" deviation. The Yugoslav communists were not the only guilty ones in this respect; the Greek party had committed an analogous mistake. Shortly before the gathering of the fifth congress, the Communist Federation of the Balkans had sent a letter to all the Balkan parties, requesting them to agitate for the independence of a united Macedonia. The Communist Party of Greece had not only refused to publish this letter, but had actually sent a letter of protest to the executive committee of the Balkan Communist Federation. In their protest, the Greek communists expressed the opinion that the problem could only be settled by giving the Macedonians a measure of autonomy within the three states in which they lived.

Deviations of a "social-imperialist" nature, Manuilsky angrily explained, could be found among the communists of all the major colonial powers. In the French party, there had been the amazing episode of the Sidi-bel-Abbes section in 1922. And far from correcting all its

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

mistakes, the French Communist Party persisted in them. It was obviously afraid to launch a frontal attack against France's generally accepted and popular colonial policy. On the occasion of the French party's Lyon congress (1923), the Communist International had sent a message to the "French workers and the colonial peoples". In publishing this proclamation, *L'Humanité* erased the words "and to the colonial peoples". Even if you don't do anything, Manuisky thundered, at least have the courage to live up to the tradition of the great reformist Jean Jaurès, who never hesitated to attack his country's colonial policy!⁶² Furthermore, the French Communist Party was failing in the task of drawing white and colored workers together into a common organization. The party was not presenting enough colored candidates in the elections.

The British party, according to Manuisky, was almost as guilty as the French. It was failing to fight for the liberation of the colonies with sufficient vigor. It was failing to agitate with sufficient clarity and force for the right of Ireland to secede. There could be no possible excuse for such a weak attitude, especially since MacDonald's Labor Government was in power.⁶³

Manuisky then attacked the Luxemburgist errors of certain parties. "The standpoint of Rosa Luxemburg", he said, "can be characterized as a theory of *national nihilism*". It is "a reflection of the infancy of the workers' movements, when... the question of the seizure of power was a remote problem, a problem of the future."⁶⁴

Finally, he returned to his reproaches against the Turkish comrades for their policy of class collaboration with the capitalist bourgeoisie.

To conclude his report, Manuisky spoke about the national program inside the U.S.S.R. The communists of the whole world, he said, should seek their inspiration in the Soviet solution of the problem. Equality in the Soviet Union is not a formal, theoretical equality. "The proletariat of our country had to undertake the task of bringing about a real economic equality, which is the only guarantee for the normal development of the peoples belonging to our workers' and peasants' republic."⁶⁵

Manuisky then pointed out that Russia constitutes a national incarnation of the whole essence of the world revolution. "Lenin once said that Soviet Russia, through its geographic position, represents a bridge between Europe and Asia." As Russia was a bridge between Europe and Asia, thus the communist revolution, of which Russia was the bastion, also represented a bridge between Europe and Asia. A bridge between the proletarian revolution of the advanced European countries and the national, democratic revolution of the underdeveloped areas

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 631.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 632.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 633.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 634.

of Asia, Africa, South America. The Bolshevik revolution had an equal impact on the European proletarians and on the Asian peasants. The solidarity of the Asian peasants who made up the majority of the Soviet State's non-Russian population alone made it possible to defeat the White armies. The immense manpower reserves of the non-Russian, Asiatic peasantry furnished the Russian proletariat with the bulk of the Red soldiers who saved the revolution. Manuilsky explained that the Whites, too, had tried to exploit these manpower reserves. The Whites, too, had attempted to use the masses against the Reds. But the Whites failed because they had nothing to offer the peasants. The Reds won because they offered the peasant masses two priceless things: national self-determination and land!

Manuilsky spoke about the national settlement embodied in the constitution of the Soviet Union, and asked all communists to reflect deeply about that constitution and to regard it as a small-scale model of the great national settlement that would one day be effected on the scale of the whole world.⁶⁶

For the first time, the Stalinist doctrine of the universeal applicability of the Russian example was thus publicly enounced. Henceforth, revolutionary effectiveness would be judged by the degree of loyalty to the Russian model.

c. *Roy vs. Manuilsky.*

The discussion which followed was very lively. Manuilsky had sounded a note which made it inevitable for the Right and the Left to take position. Manuilsky had presented a stand which was more Right than Left, more Eastern than Western, more Jacobin than proletarian. It was Stalin's viewpoint. The main representative of the Left was M. N. Roy. At the second congress, Lenin had convinced him that the revolution might occur by gradual stages and that tactical collaboration with the bourgeoisie was inevitable in certain cases. But during the time following the fourth congress, Roy had moved leftward. He had witnessed the failure of the great hartal in India; he had seen the unwillingness of Gandhi to resort to violent methods; he saw the uncertain attitude of the right wing of the Congress party, and the willingness of the Indian upper bourgeoisie to agree to a halfway compromise with imperialism. Roy had therefore come to the conclusion that collaboration with the nationalist bourgeoisie was impossible except in very backward countries. He believed that in the somewhat more advanced colonies, the interest of the national bourgeoisie and the foreign imperialists gradually ceased to be contradictory. He explained this by what he called his "theory of decolonization". Before the first world war, the basic policy of European colonialism had tended to treat the colonies primarily as sources of raw material and as markets for

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 637.

European industrial consumers' goods. After the war, this policy changed. Rather than to look for markets for their industrial consumers' goods, European capitalists were more and more looking to the overseas territories as markets for industrial producers' goods, for machinery. This was due to the intensification of customs restrictions within Europe. In order to transform the colonies into markets for producers' goods, the industrialization of the colonies had to be stimulated. Since this was so, there ceased to be a contradiction between the interests of the capitalists of the advanced and the underdeveloped countries. The source of discontentment of the bourgeoisie of the colonies had been the European powers' pre-war attempt to hinder the capitalist development of the colonies. Now, with the colonialists' change of policy, the way was open to a fruitful cooperation between European and native capitalism. The European and native producers and investors could work together harmoniously, dividing the profits evenly among themselves. According to Roy, the Europeans' change of economic policy had thus brought the capitalist bourgeoisie of the countries like India over to the side of imperialism.

Roy based his attack against Manuilsky and against the right wing on the theses of the second congress. As we pointed out before, Lenin had made his theses ambiguous. He had left the way open for a left and a right alternative, to be seized according to the dictates of the overall situation. In case of a revolutionary development in the West, the "left" tactics could be applied in the colonies, and in case of stagnation in the West, the "right" tactics. Roy brought the leftist aspects of Lenin's theses to bear against Manuilsky.

Much has been misunderstood in the Comintern's application of the second congress' theses, he began. The resolution on the report of the E.C.C.I., which was being drafted by the fifth congress, stated that the Comintern must continue to establish close relationships with the national liberation movements of the colonial and semi-colonial countries. This part of the resolution is contrary to the spirit of the theses of the second congress, Roy affirmed. Besides, the congress seemed to forget that striving for close relations with the nationalists "was not always crowned with success".⁶⁷

The fifth congress' resolution presents the obligation of the communists to support national movements as an *absolute* one. The theses of the second congress, however, made such tactics purely *relative*, purely *conditional*. Roy quoted from the theses of the second congress: "All communist parties must actively support revolutionary liberation movements, the form of the support being in each case determined by the party, on the basis of an examination of the concrete existing conditions." Conditions change constantly, Roy argued. It may today be correct to support a certain nationalist movement, and tomorrow it may already be wrong. "It is therefore dangerous, to lay down a firm

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 639.

and fixed formula, which is supposed to guide us, regardless of changing circumstances.”⁶⁸ It is very important, in order to keep the basic principles of Lenin’s theses alive, to fight against any mechanical, dead interpretation of these theses. The theses of Lenin furthermore say nothing about an actual tactical alliance with the revolutionary bourgeoisie, but insist on alliance with the peasantry, and only the peasantry.⁶⁹ The theses furthermore limit the cases in which a national emancipation movement may be supported, by stating that this must only be done “to... gather the elements of the future proletarian parties in all backward countries, and to educate them in the consciousness of their special task, i.e., the task of struggle against bourgeois-democratic tendencies within their own nation”. Furthermore Lenin’s theses warn that “support [of a national movement] does not demand a direct connection with bourgeois nationalists, who do not desire any connection with the Communist International, but a revolutionary organization of the working class and the peasantry”. The resolution of the fifth congress, however, speaks of direct contact with the national movements, and does so in a quasi-absolute sense. This is wrong, Roy insisted. “It is a mistake to generalize.”⁷⁰ It is impossible to speak very simply about a national liberation movement as though it were a single, homogeneous, universal phenomenon. Roy reminded the congress of the fact that there is no single, typical, universal “national liberation movement”. There are many different national movements, many varieties of them, and every individual variety would require a different, individual, relative approach.

Roy charged that so far all attempts of the Comintern to establish workable relations with bourgeois parties had been a failure. The only bourgeois nationalist groups with which the communists had been able to establish relationships were not revolutionary parties struggling for power, but revolutionary bourgeois parties which had already *seized* power, and which dominated their country’s government. And in these rare cases of direct contact, Roy continued, it was the *Soviet Government and not the International which established this contact*.⁷¹

In an attempt to analyze the reasons why the Comintern usually failed to establish direct contact with national emancipation movements, Roy divided the underdeveloped countries into three categories.

First, the category of very backward countries, with a patriarchal-feudal system. In these cases, no contact can be established with the nationalist bourgeoisie for the simple reason that there is none. In such a country, certain feudal leaders can sometimes play an objectively progressive, democratic and anti-imperialist role, and must be energetically supported.⁷²

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 639.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 640.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 641.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 641.

⁷² *Ibid.*

The second category—semi-colonial countries, with theoretical political independence—and the third category,—colonies properly speaking—, also present great problems in regard to direct contact with revolutionary nationalists. In order to show what these difficulties may be, Roy took up the case of his own country, India.

Manuilsky had mentioned the great strike in Bombay as a manifestation of national rebellion. This indicated that Manuilsky knew nothing about India, said Roy very bluntly. The great Bombay strike was an expression of class, and not of national, struggle. It was directed against the Indian capitalist class more than against foreign imperialism. The origin of the strike was to be found in the competition between the Indian and British textile industries. In 1922, the Bombay textile manufacturers decided to lower their workers' wages in order to be able to stand up against the imported Lancashire goods. The reformist nationalists talked to the workers about the political significance of this competition, and advised them to accept the reduction of wages, since it was a matter of national interest, of national independence. The workers refused to agree to this reasoning and went on strike, moved by the consciousness of their class interest, which happened to enter a phase of inevitable conflict with the Indian bourgeoisie's "national interest". In the same way, said Roy, the peasant insurrections which Manuilsky mentioned were class, rather than nationalist, rebellions. They were directed against native as much as against foreign usurers. "This is an indication of the fact that the first phase of the national struggle is already over."⁷³

At this point, Roy remarked that he might be accused of the "Luxemburgist" deviation of replacing national self-determination by "self-determination of the toiling masses". This was not so, he explained. "But if we recognize the right of self-determination of nations, that does not mean that we necessarily recognize the right of self-determination of the bourgeoisie or ruling class of the oppressed nationality, to the exclusion of the toiling masses. It is true, that just as the bourgeoisie or ruling classes are not the sole carriers of the right of self-determination, the proletariat or the toiling masses are not the sole carriers of this right either. But it is necessary to analyze the social conditions; it is necessary to analyze the facts, to understand which one of the social classes can under the given circumstances be the leader in the struggle. . . . Even though the Communist International must in principle support all national liberation movements, it is necessary for practical purposes—i.e., when we try to translate our principle of support into deeds,—to determine which class, which social element is objectively capable of leading the struggle to final victory, for we must enter into direct contact with that class. This direct contact will then lead us to the practical possibility of offering our support to the whole nation. This should be the practical way."⁷⁴

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 644.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 642.

In 1920 to 1921, Roy charged, the national movement was sabotaged by the bourgeoisie. Considering this, "must we retain the formula, that the national bourgeoisie is objectively a revolutionary force?" In view of the Indian facts, "this would be a ridiculous position".⁷⁵

In the colonies the bourgeoisie was more and more ceasing to be a revolutionary force. Furthermore it is not always true, Roy explained, that the colonial bourgeoisie is anti-feudalist. In recent times there had rather come about an amalgamation of interests between the bourgeoisie and the feudal aristocrats. The cases of personal and family union between bourgeoisie and squirearchy were frequent. The result of the change in imperialist economic policy was the danger of an eventual union of imperialists, feudalists and bourgeoisie in a common counter-revolutionary front. In order to keep the national middle class from such a betrayal and to safeguard the interests of the revolution, "we must mobilize the workers and the peasants and lead this organized revolutionary army to support the national bourgeoisie in its struggles against imperialism. . . . Therefore we must draw up a program proclaiming direct union of the Executive with the nationalists, by stressing rather the organization of our own political apparatus, by means of which the nationalist bourgeoisie can be led by revolutionary forces and saved from the danger of compromises."⁷⁶

Not only in India, but also in Egypt and other countries one could observe the effect of conciliating gestures on the part of the imperialist powers on the national bourgeoisie. By promising the native bourgeoisie a greater measure of autonomy, by agreeing to stimulate the development of industry rather than to hinder it, the imperialist powers were able to keep India and Egypt under their thumb more effectively than if they tried to repress all national demands. Already the right wing of the Congress party was no longer demanding secession from the British Empire, but merely Dominion status within the Commonwealth. In the same way, Zaglul Pasha seemed ferociously revolutionary before he came to power. After his rise he made concessions to Britain and followed a brutally repressive policy toward the communists and labor unions.

Regarding the attitude of the communists toward nationalist leaders who, like Kemal or Zaglul, had risen to power, Roy expressed what was the standard Comintern line.

"We shall support the ruling bourgeoisie in its demands against imperialism, but at the same time we shall also carry on our policy according to the interests of the working class. Our tactics must force the native bourgeoisie to present greater demands and to undertake a greater measure of intervention in the power sphere of imperialism. In a word, we must render it impossible for the struggle for independence

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 645.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 646.

to be sacrificed on the altar of compromise between native bourgeoisie and imperialists.”⁷⁷

In each case, Roy concluded, it must be decided individually whether a direct contact with the nationalist bourgeoisie should be established or not. It would be very wrong to say that such a contact should be made in all cases. But whatever the Comintern's best tactical behaviour toward a given bourgeoisie might be, one rule could be made almost universal: to undertake “the organization of the exploited class into revolutionary peoples' parties”.⁷⁸

Basically, the disagreement between Manuilsky and Roy, was thus based on the following points: the Right considered that at the bourgeois-democratic stage of development, the native bourgeoisie of an underdeveloped country generally played a revolutionary role, and must be supported by the communists not only occasionally and indirectly, but on the basis of a direct tactical alliance. Only at a much later date, after a preliminary victory over the imperialists, would the native bourgeoisie turn counter-revolutionary, and would the next phase—the phase of acute social struggle within the nation—arrive. It is probable that Manuilsky—and Stalin, whose viewpoint he represented—were so optimistic regarding the revolutionary character of the native bourgeoisies, because the Russian leaders were not only communists. They were also the governors of a state which entertained excellent relations with the national bourgeois governments of countries like Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, South China. They were thus led to identify the Soviet Union with communism, and to forget what Roy, as a revolutionary in an underdeveloped country, knew from his own experience: that friendliness toward the Soviet Government is not identical with friendliness toward communism; that a national bourgeois leader might gladly conclude a pact of friendship with the Soviet State, while at the same time ordering the execution or imprisonment of “his own” communists. Roy, who was aware of this latter fact, doubted that the Comintern could generally “use” the nationalists in the interests of world revolution. He saw the possibility of the process being reversed: the nationalists blithely “using” the communists as long as they could be of any assistance in the national revolution, and hanging them as soon as they became a nuisance. Roy therefore advocated great prudence in the matter of alliance with a nationalist bourgeoisie. For him, the most important task was that of building people's parties on which the communists could count, parties made up only of reliable revolutionary elements: workers and peasants. Once such parties had been organized, the communists might or might not conclude tactical alliances with the national bourgeoisie, according to the individual case. At any rate, if they found it convenient to conclude such an alliance, they would do so from a basis of strength: they would have their revolutionary people's party to fall back upon, in case the bourgeoisie betrayed them.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 650.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 651.

Consciously or unconsciously, Stalin's and Manuilsky's scepticism regarding social revolution, and their readiness to conclude alliances with nationalist groups, was an expression of the power interests of the Russian bureaucracy. *National* movements implied bureaucratic discipline and leadership from above, more than popular and *social* movements. The fact that alliances "from above" required the continued presence of a central Russian leadership, while upheavals "from below" might render such a leadership obsolete, may have influenced the Stalinist group's attitude toward the Eastern nationalisms.

Roy, for the time being, agreed with Trotsky in as far as the national-colonial question was concerned. Both sides could base themselves on Lenin's theses with their two alternatives, their ambiguities. Lenin, who alone could have settled the dispute, lay, embalmed, in his mausoleum.

d. *Right, Left and Center.*

The congress was split between the two tendencies. The different points of Manuilsky's introductory report were taken up and on each of these points, "left" and "right" viewpoints clashed.

Boshkovitch, the Yugoslav delegate, took a "right-wing" stand, but went farther to the right than Manuilsky, in so far as he made remarks which were indeed close to the "Bauerism" of which Manuilsky had accused the Yugoslav party. Boshkovitch admitted that some of his comrades had not yet accepted the Leninist theses on the national question.⁷⁹ At the end of 1923, the Yugoslav Communist Party had taken various resolutions, stating, among other things, that the party must "support the struggle of the peasant masses of the oppressed nations, and coordinate this struggle with that of the working class against Capital".⁸⁰ Furthermore, the Yugoslav communists had resolved that "the union of the toiling masses of the various nationalities lays the foundation for the establishment of a federal workers' and peasants' republic in Yugoslavia, in the whole region of the Balkans, and finally in the whole Danubian area".⁸¹ This was quite in agreement with the line of the Comintern and of its Balkan Federation. On the other hand, Boshkovitch seemed to confirm Manuilsky's accusation of Bauerism, by stating that for the time being the Yugoslav party was advocating federation *within* the framework of the capitalist state. "In the present historic moment, it is necessary to issue the slogan of federation for Croatia, Slovenia and other territories".⁸²

Kreibich, from Czechoslovakia, also took a "Bauerist" stand, and defended his opposition to Sudeten irredentism against Manuilsky. He based himself on Lenin's teachings. "The proclamation of the right to

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 658.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 659.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 660.

secession does not mean that in every case, in which this question presents itself, we, as a party, have to favor secession. That would not be Leninism." And he reminded the audience that Lenin had once compared the right to secession to the right to divorce. Recognition of the right to secede did not mean that a nation must necessarily secede from another, just as the right to divorce does not mean that it is always desirable for married couples to divorce.⁸³ A communist must advocate and defend the right to secede and the right to divorce, but at the same time he may influence a nation not to secede, just as he may advise husbands and wives to remain together and to settle their disputes in the intimacy of the conjugal bed-chamber. On the basis of this Leninist metaphor, Kreibich tried to prove that the Czech party's stand against Sudeten secession was correct.

The question of irredentism between a workers' state and a bourgeois state is different from a question of irredentism between two bourgeois states, said Kreibich. In the former case there cannot be the slightest doubt as to the legitimacy of an irredentism which tends toward the inclusion of a given population in a workers' state. The Czech party did not have the slightest hesitation in regard to the Carpatho-Russian and East Galician question. It uncompromisingly demanded the inclusion of these populations in the Soviet Union. But it felt that the Sudeten question belonged to a very different category. Kreibich maintained that in German Bohemia there was no irredentist movement, the Sudeten Germans being perfectly contented in the Czecho-Slovak state. Why should the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia demand something which no one else demanded?⁸⁴ But the main reason against Sudeten secession was the following: "German Bohemia is a highly industrialized region, with a strongly developed capitalism, superior to Czech capitalism. Therefore it is by no means a question of oppression and exploitation of an economically retarded territory by a foreign capitalism." If a proletarian revolution broke out in Germany, "a German Bohemia torn off from the Czechoslovak Republic would only be a dangerous burden [for the German revolutionaries]. Economically this territory is by no means of vital importance to Germany, and politically and strategically it would be a source of weakness, for its annexation to Germany would only be possible through a war with Czechoslovakia... The Czech revolution, however, would lose a precious stronghold, while Czech nationalism would be stimulated to the point of smothering the revolutionary movement in Czechoslovakia.

"If, on the other hand, the proletarian revolution should be victorious in Czechoslovakia sooner than in Germany,... then we would have to use force to repress an irredentism in the German territories, which could only have a counter-revolutionary character, for the separation of these territories [from Czechoslovakia] and their incorporation into a

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 661.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 662.

capitalist Germany would force a proletarian Czechoslovak state to capitulate before the counter-offensive of Czechoslovak capitalism." And, Kreibich continued, if the Sudeten-Land were separated from Czechoslovakia within the framework of the capitalist system, the result would be a desperate fight of the whole Czechoslovak nation, including the proletariat, since a German imperialism, strengthened by annexation of the Sudeten-Land, would overrun the weakened Czechoslovakia and turn her into a German colony.⁸⁵

Kreibich indicated what the Czech communists would be willing to do. "As Communists we would fight for the administrative autonomy of the German territories, for equality of national rights, and for the abolition of the domination of a so-called State Nation, which in reality is the Czech bourgeoisie. But our fight for the national liberation of the oppressed nations must not be carried on in such a way, that it would have as its objective result the restoration of the national oppression of such nations as the Czechs and the Slovaks, who have already fought a fight for liberation to the utmost limits that are possible within the capitalist society, a fight for liberation, which certainly was no less justified and revolutionary than the national liberation struggles which we propose to support at the present time."⁸⁶

The "Left" stand was presented by the German Ternik. Ternik warned against the tendency to conceive of the right of national self-determination as an absolute right. It is a relative right, he insisted, sometimes valid and sometimes not. The typical example of a misinterpretation of the right of self-determination had been the attitude of Thalheimer and Radek on the occasion of the Ruhr crisis. Ternik charged that the Right had scandalously misquoted Lenin to prove its point. Lenin, in his writings against Rosa Luxemburg, had said that a national liberation war was possible even in Europe, in periods during which the proletarian movement would be weak and defeated. Radek and Thalheimer had applied Lenin's statement to a period during which the proletarian movement, far from being weak, was extremely aggressive and revolutionary. They had dared to imply that in 1923 there was no independent revolutionary workers' movement in Germany! Germany had been equated to a backward colonial country.

The revolutionary agitation in Germany must inevitably have a communist and proletarian character, and not a bourgeois and national one. Ternik insisted that national problems had long been solved in Germany. The model of the German revolutionary struggle must not be seen in the chauvinist outcries of the middle class nationalists, but in the organizational union of the German and Polish workers in Silesia. German and Polish workers fighting shoulder to shoulder against both the German and the Polish bourgeoisie were the truest and purest representatives of proletarian internationalism.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 663. Kreibich was eleven years in advance over the majority in the Comintern, in recognizing the danger of Drang nach Everywhere.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Ternik concluded by attacking Kreibich's standpoint and accusing the Czech of "Social Patriotism" ⁸⁷

Roy's viewpoint, with its warning against contacts with the bourgeoisie of the colonial countries, was indirectly supported by Japan's Sen Katayama, who said that there are two possible types of national movements: bourgeois-national, and petty-bourgeois-national. Katayama considered the bourgeoisie to be *ipso-facto* non-revolutionary; only the petty bourgeoisie, the lower middle class, could under certain conditions be a useful ally of the proletariat. ⁸⁸ For Katayama, even the petty bourgeoisie was not necessarily a reliable revolutionary force. In countries in which a dynamic new bourgeoisie had arisen, the lower middle class was likely to follow the leadership of that bourgeoisie and to join it in all its compromises. Only in countries where no new bourgeoisie had yet arisen, the small craftsmen and merchants would wholeheartedly join forces with the proletariat. Katayama characterized the Chinese revolution as being basically bourgeois, while the Korean movement tended to be petty-bourgeois-national. ⁸⁹ He warned the Eastern communists against the temptation of joining forces with bourgeois pseudo-revolutionary and racist movements, such as the "Pan-Asian" movement sponsored by the Japanese imperialists. "Pan-Asianism" based itself on legitimate grievances of the Asian peoples, such as the discriminatory immigration policy of the United States and Australia, but it preached race hatred against the white nations and served as a façade for Japanese expansionism.

On the other hand, Manuilsky's viewpoint, with its belief in the revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations, was defended by the American delegates, Jackson and Pepper. Jackson, speaking about the Negro question in the United States, said that the agitation among the Negroes must ultimately have the purpose of leading them from race consciousness to class consciousness. Nevertheless, he continued, even the race consciousness or national feeling of certain sections of the colored bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie is a useful revolutionary factor. The Chicago Negro congress had shown that a fruitful collaboration between the communists and the nationalists and racists of Garvey's movement was possible. Jackson hoped that the United States could become a center of agitation and organization for the nationalist movement of all Negroes, including the African peoples. ⁹⁰

Pepper contradicted Roy directly. "I do not believe that the new revolutionary bourgeoisie of the colonies has become so counter-revolutionary, in the objective sense of the word. I know that the Indian bourgeoisie is intensifying the oppression of its own working class.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 666.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 652.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 652.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 668-9.

But its objective role, its struggle against British imperialism, is revolutionary in spite of this.”⁹¹

Manuilsky's and Pepper's viewpoint imply that the local communist parties of the colonies must continue to sacrifice themselves in the overall interests of the world revolution, as long as their bourgeoisie could be “revolutionary” in its effect on international politics. This was the *Soviet State* view. It is not surprising that Roy and Katayama, who worked at the mass level in their own countries, felt differently.

Pepper asked Manuilsky to add a few words to his report, regarding those nationalities for whom secession was not possible because they lived scattered throughout a territory dominated by other national groups. Pepper demanded that for such scattered nationalities—the American Negroes in particular—the slogan of *equal rights* be raised as a parallel to the otherwise applicable slogan of the right to secession.⁹²

The severe criticism undertaken by Roy and Ho Chi-Minh at the beginning of the Congress against the lack of activity of the English and French parties was repeated once more by Ho Chi-Minh. He proposed that the French Communist Party should give more space to colonial affairs in the *Humanité*, that it should intensify its “Agitprop”⁹³ activities among the colonial peoples, that it should try to send French colonial natives to study at the University for Eastern Peoples in Moscow. The party should also see to it that all colored workers living in France be organized in the C.G.T.U.,⁹⁴ and should direct all party members to devote more attention to the colonial problem.⁹⁵

Violent criticism was hurled at the Communist Party of Great Britain by the Irishman Larkin. Larkin was a devoted Irish revolutionary, fanatical and stubborn, anarchist more than Marxist. The International admired his fighting abilities in the Irish underground struggle, but did not think highly of his intelligence on the level of theory. In stentorian tones, Larkin informed the assembly that the Irish are the most revolutionary, militant, conscious and heroic nation on earth. He openly abused the communists of other countries. “I hear the German party, the French party, the Russian and the Italian party, talking and talking, but you all marched like miserable slaves under the yoke of your masters, while *we*, a small nation, a people of four millions, oppressed by the greatest empire—threatened by England, encircled by its fleet, with the Americans menacing us from behind—: we alone stood up against the British Empire. We were not like Comrade Roy and other comrades from the British Empire. We did not beg for help. We undertook all by ourselves the mission to march forth and to fight the British Empire!”

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 698.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 699.

⁹³ Agitation and propaganda work. The Comintern and each of its sections had a specialized Agitprop department.

⁹⁴ Communist trade union organization, opposed to the syndicalist C.G.T.

⁹⁵ *Protokoll des 5. Kongresses...*, p. 686-7.

Larkin was of the opinion, furthermore, that fascism was more bloody and hideous in Ireland than anywhere else in the world. He shouted that the International had never done anything for the Irish. For the Irish, who were perhaps the most important nation on earth! The Irish were scattered all over the world; the world could not exist without the Irish! Passing from roaring fury to tearful pathos, Larkin concluded by asking the ungrateful foreign comrades to make at least a small gesture, to give recognition to the Irish revolutionaries as a Communist Party, to send them at least "a communist greeting".⁹⁶

This unpleasant performance called forth a reply from the Englishman Douglas, who mildly reminded Larkin that the proletariat of other countries had also fought, and that the destiny of other nations was as important as that of Ireland. "Larkin asks us: 'Are you with us?' Our question is: 'Is Larkin with us?'" Douglas also expressed the belief that the Irish proletariat was not the only group responsible for the creation of the Communist International.⁹⁷

Finally the Turkish delegate Faruk rose to defend his party against the accusation of being supporters of Turkish capitalism in the struggle against foreign competition. He maintained that this mistaken tendency inside the Turkish party had been thoroughly exposed and eradicated. The Turkish Communists had decided that the bourgeoisie may only be supported in its destructive activities (destruction of feudalism and imperialism) but not in its constructive tasks (construction of capitalism). While the Communist Parties of Turkey and of various other Muslim countries must carefully refrain from aiding the bourgeoisie in the edification and consolidation of capitalism, they must be ready at all moments to support the struggle of the bourgeoisie against foreign imperialist enemies such as England and France.⁹⁸

This answer was no answer. The question remained wide open. On the one hand, it was agreed that the communists must aid the young national bourgeoisie against its oppressors. On the other hand they may not support this young bourgeoisie in the task of capitalist construction. But a protectionist economic policy enacted by a young bourgeoisie for the purpose of defending its nascent industries against foreign competition is a measure which has two aspects. It constitutes a feature of capitalist construction and consolidation. It is also an anti-imperialist measure, a step toward greater national independence, a blow against the dominant capitalism of the great exporting powers. What Manuilsky, Faruk and all the others failed to mention was the profound dilemma which this presented to the communists. If they failed to support protectionism, they were guilty of failing to fight for the national independence of an underdeveloped nation; if they supported protectionism, they were guilty of aiding and abetting capitalist construction.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 683-5.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 690-1.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 710-11.

e. *The Agrarian Problem.*

Before the discussion on the national and colonial question was brought to a close, the agrarian problem, which is closely related to the former subject, was brought up. Ho Chi-Minh presented a report on the agrarian situation in the colonies. He pointed out, in a very scholarly manner, on the basis of statistics, that colonialism had increased the misery of Asia's rural populations. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the Asiatic peasants had been poor, and exploited by feudal landlords, but there had been few completely landless and enslaved peasants. It was the economic intervention of the white invaders which dispossessed the Asiatic peasantry. The traditional semi-feudal type of land tenure was transformed into a sort of capitalist-feudal type. Mass expropriation of the poorer peasants was the result of the establishment of huge plantations. Famine followed, for lands which originally had been used to grow food crops were transformed into rubber, tea, or textile fiber plantations. A huge agricultural proletariat took the place of the former small farmers. Ho Chi-Minh concluded that colonialist capitalism had bred far more misery than progress. The schools and hospitals of which the colonial administrations were so proud were completely insignificant in comparison to the immense spoliation and degradation of the peasantry which the colonial agricultural revolution had brought about.⁹⁹

The Mexican Wolfe spoke about the importance of the agrarian question in the Latin American national and social revolution. He explained that the Communist Party of Mexico was basing its agrarian program on the ideas of the peasant leader Emiliano Zapata. The communists followed Zapata in advocating, not the redistribution of land on a basis of individual ownership, as the "petty bourgeois" government was doing, but the return of the ancient communal lands to the traditional collective ownership of the peasants. The agricultural village commune being the traditional form of Mexican Indian land ownership, it would be possible to avoid the phase of individual, capitalist farming, and to use the "primitive communist" land organization as a basis for a "higher communist" organization. The communists not only attacked the government's tendency to divide land on an individual basis, but also protested against the slowness with which the land reform was being carried out. They tried to drive the peasants to seize the feudal lands spontaneously and by force, instead of waiting until the redistribution had been decided from above. The party was opposed to the governmental policy of indemnizing the expropriated landlords. It was also opposed to the distribution of national lands. It proposed that these should remain the collective property of the whole society. Against the government slogan, "every man is entitled to a piece of land", the communists raised the counter-slogan, "Every man is entitled

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 788-93.

to as much land as he can cultivate". These agrarian ideas fitted into the overall communist program, which demanded: 1) A workers' and peasants' government. The Mexican social-democratic government was defined as not being a real workers' and peasants' government, because the workers and peasants did not "really" control it.¹⁰⁰ 2) Abolition of the standing army and its replacement by a peasants' militia. To carry out their agrarian program, the communists actively aided in the creation of a revolutionary peasant party, which would continue to propagate the ideals of Zapata. The communists joined this peasant party individually and set up cells within it.¹⁰¹

f. *The Stalin "Line".*

The discussion on the national and colonial question was brought to a close on July 8, by Manuilsky, who tried to sum up the discussion and to reply to the criticisms and attacks that had been made against his view. Roy, as principal opponent of Manuilsky, had been offered another chance to speak and to present his side of the question. With untypical reticence, he declined to do so, and left the floor to Manuilsky. All the delegates who at the beginning of the congress had defended their own viewpoint, suddenly showed suspicious unanimity in endorsing the Stalin line.

Manuilsky reported that the committees working on the national and colonial question had drafted resolutions concerning the colonies, the Far East, the Near East, the Balkans and Central Europe, and the Negroes.¹⁰² Since the congress' time was running out, the Russian leader proposed that these resolutions be left for definite approval to the Plenum of the E.C.C.I.—which would meet immediately after the end of the congress.¹⁰³ Then he turned against his opponents and began to attack their positions.

Roy, according to Manuilsky, had taken up a "nihilist standpoint".¹⁰⁴

He had grievously underestimated the revolutionary vigor of the Asian nationalists. It was not true that the bourgeois-nationalist revolution was dying out since 1922. The very opposite was true. The movement was growing in numbers and in determination. Turkey and Egypt should prove that the national movement was making progress. In keeping his eyes fixed only on the Indian bourgeoisie, and judging events by their

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 803. We suspect that the meaning of this would become clearer if the word 'communist' were substituted for the words 'workers and peasants'.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 802-3.

¹⁰² Latin America was, strangely enough, excluded from the "national-colonial" category.

¹⁰³ This, as well as the final pro-Stalin unanimity, indicates that Russian control over the Comintern had become complete. Henceforth, all disagreement became 'deviationism'.

¹⁰⁴ *Protokoll des 5. Kongresses...*, p. 1000.

immediate aspects instead of seeing them in a larger context, Roy was guilty of "a certain subjectivism".¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, Manuilsky continued, Roy was entirely mistaken in claiming that the first phase of the national struggle was generally over, and that the class struggle was beginning to dominate events. "As a concrete example" (of the relative insignificance of the proletarian, social element in the national struggle), "I shall take Algeria. During the year 1922, eight strikes took place in Algeria. The total number of men participating in these strikes was approximately eight hundred. Most of the strikers worked in small shops. Now, do you think that eight hundred workers who are having a class conflict with the exploiters are able to change the general social background of the picture, considering that Algeria has a colonial population of many millions?"¹⁰⁶

Manuilsky accused Roy of seeking to continue the erroneous ideas which Bukharin held when he tried to replace the right of nations by the right of the toilers to self-determination. Roy's insistence on trying to discover which class is the "carrier" of self-determination must lead to such a result. Bukharin at least wanted to do this in Europe only. Only in Europe did he try to make the workers the sole carriers of self-determination. Roy however, tried to apply this mistaken formula even to underdeveloped Asia, which was worse. And Manuilsky defined Roy's attitude as "Proudhonism" and cited Marx' famous remark about Lafargue (who spoke about the non-existence of nations in French, which most of his listeners did not understand).¹⁰⁷

The Russian admitted that a great elasticity was necessary in evaluating the relative importance of the national and the social factor in a given revolutionary situation. But he implied that Roy, precisely, did not show such an elasticity. To show how far one should go in recognizing the self-determination of nations, the speaker mentioned Finland. Before the October Revolution, the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (Bolsheviks) favored the right of Finland to secede from the Tsarist Empire. After the October Revolution the following question presented itself: Should the Soviets allow the Finnish bourgeoisie to pull the toilers of Finland over into the camp of counter-revolution? "At first sight, one should have thought that we would oppose the secession of Finland. But during that period the whole of Great Russian bourgeois nationalism, which considered Finland's secession as a betrayal of the interests of the fatherland, was mobilized against us.

"If at that moment we had denied Finland the right of self-determination, we would have aroused distrust against the young workers' and peasants' government among all populations of the Tsarist Empire. Therefore we made this sacrifice intentionally, in the interests

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*,

¹⁰⁷ See above, p. 22.

of the revolution as a whole, in the interest of the consolidation of the proletarian dictatorship in our immense country.”¹⁰⁸

This example chosen by Manuilsky did not constitute a very convincing answer to Roy's essential objections, which were based on distrust of the colonial bourgeoisie. But the basic idea of the Russian is clear: Any failure to support a bourgeois-democratic national movement may be interpreted as a betrayal of the aims of the revolution. Even if the secession of a bourgeois-dominated colony is not directly and immediately revolutionary, it nevertheless has an indirect revolutionary value, even if that value be limited solely to the propagandist field.

Regarding Kreibich's objections to the self-determination of the Sudeten and of Slovakia, Manuilsky again pointed to the Russian example. “Before the revolution there was no profound separatist movement in the Ukraine either; nevertheless our Communist Party fought energetically for the Ukraine's right to secede, in the interest of the struggle against Great Russian chauvinism.”¹⁰⁹ The Czech Communists must do the same, in order to fight the chauvinism of the Czech bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the communists of the Sudeten Land and of Slovakia should struggle *against* the secessionist chauvinism of their own bourgeoisie. There must be one general line which meant “the right of nations to self-determination” and which expressed itself along two dialectically different and even opposed tactical methods: the secessionist agitation of the proletariat of the dominant nation, and the anti-secessionist, proletarian-solidarity agitation of the oppressed nation's proletariat.

Manuilsky pointed out that the Poles were even more guilty than the Czechs in neglecting their revolutionary duty. The communist Warsky had pretended that there was no German problem in Poland. The Russian leader sharply rebuked Warsky, whom he declared to be more blind and reactionary, in this domain, than the bourgeois statesman Nitti, who had officially recognized the gravity of the German minority problem in Poland.¹¹⁰

This had been the last session of the Congress. The new Executive Committee was elected. Among its Russian section, the Stalinist group was predominant. Stalin, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov were full members, and Trotsky, Sokolnikov, Lozovsky and Piatnitsky only “candidates”.¹¹¹ Roy remained on the Committee, as did Katayama. Semaoen continued to represent the Javanese section. Latin America was represented by Penelón. Several underdeveloped countries were also on the new International Control Commission: Brazil (Astroguilado), Mexico (Stirner), Turkey (Medjil).

¹⁰⁸ *Protokoll des 5. Kongresses...*, p. 1002.

¹⁰⁹ *Protokoll des 5. Kongresses...*, p. 1002.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1003-4.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1021.

Zinoviev then made a final speech, summing up the results of the congress. He said that the congress had served to consecrate the growth of solidarity among the sections, *the development of discipline and Bolshevik centralism*, the liquidation of errors and deviations. The congress had prepared the Comintern for the phase of "democratic pacifism" in the bourgeois world, and had confirmed the slogan: "To the masses!"¹¹²

All delegates rose to their feet, cheered wildly, and sang several stanzas of the *Internationale*.¹¹³ The fifth congress of the Comintern was over.

g. *Theses and Resolutions.*

While a large part of the delegates left immediately, to return to their respective countries, many stayed, for the purpose of attending the meeting of the enlarged Executive Committee, which had the task of working out a number of details on which the congress had taken no definite action. To complete the work of the congress on the national and colonial question, the enlarged Executive decided upon a proposal of the German delegate Geschke, to establish a permanent commission on national and colonial problems. This commission was to be composed of one representative of each colonial power, plus the permanent Executive Committee. Manuilsky proposed a permanent commission on the Negro question. This Negro commission should consist "of one member of the English, the Belgian and the French Communist Parties and the Executive Committee, to organize propaganda among the Negroes".¹¹⁴

The enlarged Executive Committee decided to issue a proclamation "to the proletarians of the whole world against the oppression of the Eastern peoples". Special reference was made, in this proclamation, to the Chinese revolutionaries who had been victims of repressive actions of the British concession police in China. Another proclamation, "To the Peoples of the East", made special reference to the importance of the peasants in the Eastern national liberation movements. "The peasants of all countries are beginning to gather under the banner of the Comintern, and you, peasants of the East, must stand by your brothers from the West." The nations which were mentioned with special praise for having rid themselves of the imperialist yoke, were the Turks and the Afghans. The proclamation ended with a special greeting to the Kuomintang.¹¹⁵

In regard to the Czech question, the Executive Committee definitely rejected Kreibich's anti-secessionist attitude, and proclaimed that the

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1026.

¹¹³ Another symptom of psychological and organizational change since Lenin's time.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1031.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1046-1049.

Czech party must at least agitate for the federal autonomy of the minorities within the Czechoslovak state. "The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia has the duty to expand the slogan of autonomy into a slogan of federal union." This would be the correct tactics within the framework of the existing democratic capitalist state. "If, however, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia should go beyond the framework of the capitalist order in the course of its struggle; if the establishment of a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government should become an immediate task, then the general slogan for the solution of the national question should be that of a union of workers' and peasants' republics... for only the voluntary union of the nations organized in the workers' and peasants' states can constitute a firm foundation for the solution of the national problem."¹¹⁶

The theses and resolutions of the fifth congress thoroughly reflect Stalin's and Manuilsky's point of view, to the exclusion of all ideas presented by Roy and the Left. In its resolution on the E.C.C.I.'s report, the congress stated: "Aside from the struggle for support by the peasant masses and by the oppressed national minorities, the Executive Committee has constantly stressed, in its directives, the importance of turning the revolutionary liberation movements of colonial peoples and of all nations of the East into allies of the revolutionary proletariat of the capitalist countries. This presupposes not only a further development of direct communications between the Executive and the national liberation movements of the East, but also a closer union of the sections of the imperialist countries with their countries' colonies, and especially, in all countries, a continuous ruthless struggle against the imperialist colonial policy of the bourgeoisie. In this respect communist agitation is still very weak everywhere."¹¹⁷

In full agreement with the orientation of the "Eastern" Stalinist group, the congress noted that the attention of the International "is too much concentrated on the West".¹¹⁸ More attention must be paid to the East.

The congress studied a plan for a new general program of the Communist International. In this program, various urgent tasks were indicated, to further the struggle against world imperialism. While the manifesto of the first Comintern congress in 1919 had only mentioned the proletarian revolution against capitalism in the West, the program adopted by the fifth congress placed the national and colonial question at the very head of its basic rules of action. It defined the immediate demands for the removal of imperialist domination to be the following.

"1. The right of nations to self-determination, including the right of total secession of the state. This principle is binding not only as a

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1053.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-5.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

demand in regard to the bourgeois state, where it serves as a means of strife against imperialism, but also under the regime of proletarian dictatorship, where it serves as a means to overcome the national mistrust which has been bred by centuries of bourgeois rule.

"2. The liberation of the colonies and the support of all colonial movements against imperialism. In cases in which a proletarian state, englobing former colonies, already exists, the latter must likewise have the right of secession.

"3. ...The Communist International also fights against capitalist immigration laws... and carries on propaganda against all kinds of chauvinism and nationalism, even if these prejudices should manifest themselves in the proletariat." ¹¹⁹

But the complete switch to the East which the Comintern had undergone, the total reversal of orientation which had taken place since the period 1919-1920, showed itself most clearly in the fifth congress' resolution on the British Labor Government: "*The present slogan must be: The liberation of the workers of England depends on the liberation of the colonies!*" ¹²⁰

In regard to the national questions in Europe, the congress fully approved the Manuilsky line, and rejected both the "Bauerism" of Kreibich and the ultra-leftism of those who considered the social question to be the only one that mattered. The Czech party was advised to "leninize" its program on the basis of Manuilsky's report. ¹²¹

h. "*Bolshevization*" Triumphant.

A new phase in the Comintern's attitude toward the national and colonial problem was thus achieved. The period stretching from the fourth to the fifth congress had brought about two basic developments. In the first place, the last remainders of "Westernism" were wiped out. While at the fourth congress Zinoviev had still been presiding, and trying to orient the discussion in an ultra-revolutionary direction, the fifth congress was placed entirely under the slogan of tactical alliance with the Eastern revolutionary bourgeoisie. It was officially stated that the East along on the road to socialism (with omission of the subsequent Western proletarian revolution. Instead of the workers of Europe breaking the chains of capitalism and drawing the peoples of the East along on the road to socialism (with omission of the capitalist phase of development) the opposite was now considered true. The nationalists of the East would go forward along the path of bourgeois-democratic, capitalist revolution, and by so doing would weaken the power of world imperialism, and give the Western proletarians the possibility to strike the decisive blow at home. This completely "Eastern"

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-5.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

evolution of Comintern doctrine was dictated by the facts. Proletarian revolution in Europe had failed. The 1923 uprising in Germany had only been a parenthesis in a generally Eastward trend of historical development. Only a doctrinaire diehard could continue to believe in the classical Marxist pattern of the Western proletariat leading the Eastern peasant masses on the revolutionary path. In the E.C.C.I. and in the Moscow leadership, Stalin had recognized the meaning of the turn of events. By means of brutal factional politics he was placing himself at the head of the international communist movement. He was free to act. Lenin, who had followed the "Eastward" development, but who believed in persuasion rather than in compulsion, was dead. And Stalin, was able, at the fifth Congress, to impose his viewpoint through Manuilsky, with practically dictatorial force.

The other development which took place between the fourth and fifth Congress was the growth of central control, of "bolshevization" in the Comintern. The extension of central control affected the national and colonial action of the International in two ways. On the one hand, it made it possible for the details of each national section's tactics to be analysed with greater clearness and precision than ever before, and for the right or left "deviations" of backward and inexperienced parties to be effectively corrected. But on the other hand, the centralization also represented an element of hindrance. The very fact that the revolution was to be divided into a great number of national revolutions, instead of occurring on a simultaneous world-wide scale was in basic contradiction with the idea of a top-heavy centralist organization. But this contradiction was inevitable. As we have pointed out before, the necessary switch to a national concept of revolution had brought about the absolute predominance of the national incarnation of communism: the Soviet Union. Certainly Stalin bears a great personal responsibility in this bureaucratization of the Revolution. Certainly he is guilty of having replaced discussion by coercion and rule from below by rule from above. But in so doing, he simply accentuated a trend of development, which was due to historical forces beyond the control of any single man or even group of men.

After 1924, a period of revolutionary uprising in the underdeveloped countries begins. This period unfolded in the spirit marked by the fifth congress: concentration on the East as the most important revolutionary battlefield; and continued centralization and bureaucratization of the Comintern, not merely under Russian, but under Stalinist rule.

VI

THE COMINTERN AND THE NATIONAL-COLONIAL QUESTION FROM 1924 TO 1926

As far as the national and colonial problem is concerned, the period stretching from the fifth to the sixth congress of the Comintern can be divided into two parts. From 1924 to 1926, an overall concern existed for the nationalist evolution of the whole of the non-European world. The years 1926-1927, on the other hand, brought about an almost exclusive concentration of the International's attention on China. In order to be able to pay sufficient attention to both aspects of this period, we are dividing our work into two chapters. The present one will deal with the overall development up to 1926; the next one will take up the Chinese situation in more detail.

1. FROM THE FIFTH CONGRESS TO THE SPRING OF 1925.

The process of centralization and bureaucratization of the Comintern under the leadership of Stalin showed itself through the fact that after 1924 no general congress was convoked until 1928. By the latter date, Stalin had completed his work; he had become the undisputed master of world communism. Between 1924 and 1928, discussions and consultations were not carried on at congresses but at the meetings of smaller, more restricted assemblies: the plenary sessions of the "enlarged E.C.C.I.", i.e., the permanent members of the E.C.C.I. plus a certain number of ideologically orthodox delegates from the various sections. The first enlarged Executive conference after the one which ended the fifth congress, took place in March 1925. Between the 1924 and 1925 meetings of the enlarged Executive, various events, which can be enumerated quite swiftly, influenced Bolshevik attitudes.

After the fifth congress, the position of the delegates of underdeveloped countries in the Comintern was firmer than ever. Ho Chi-Minh, who had been virtually unknown before the fifth congress, now played an important role in the International. With his extremely discerning mind, wide scope of knowledge, and belief in the unity of the movements of all oppressed nations, he did not limit himself to concern with Indochina, but gave his advice on national and colonial problems affecting a great many other countries as well. Thus he carried out a study of the race problem in the United States, and published his conclusions under the title: "Lynching; a little-known

aspect of American civilization.”¹ This article deserves to be mentioned inasmuch as it proves the growing overall consciousness of the colonial leaders. Concern for the revolutionary destiny of one particular nation was giving way to a concern for the destiny of all colored and underprivileged groups. Furthermore, Ho's article is a fine example of intelligent writing. Though parts of the article are passionate and violent, a scientific, shrewdly observing, rather objective undertone runs through it. And the hair-raising facts reported by Ho Chi-Minh are, unfortunately, true beyond dispute. Ho Chi-Minh also expressed his opinion on overall problems of Asia and of the Pacific. As Sen Katayama had already done at the fifth congress, Ho warned the Asian nationalists against the temptation of following Japan in an anti-white racist crusade. The Japanese slogan of “1,000,000,000 yellow men getting rid of the domination of 60,000,000 white men” was dangerous, according to Ho, since it merely served to prepare an imperialist war between Japan and the white powers.²

Turkey continued to be observed with great attention by the Comintern leaders. The tactical line did not vary: Kemal was a revolutionary and anti-imperialist leader, to be criticized for his lack of initiative, but supported in all actions which objectively tended to further the democratic development of Turkey and to weaken the power of British imperialism. In February 1924 an uprising of the Kurds took place under the leadership of Sheikh Said against the Ankara government. On this occasion the Comintern demonstrated that it had not forgotten its Marxian relativism, and that it was not willing to support the national struggle of a particular group if it should constitute a threat to the overall development of world revolution. Even though the Kurds had very legitimate grievances against the Kemalist dictatorship, the Comintern condemned their movement, and defined it as being counter-revolutionary. In fact, it is known that Great Britain viewed Sheikh Said's movement with a friendly eye. Moscow decided that the Kurds were merely serving as tools in the hand of the British against the progressive and anti-imperialist Ankara government. The case was analogous to that of the Czech and South Slav movements in 1848. The Comintern proclaimed that the Kurdish uprising was directed by feudal reactionaries and British agents, and that the only real salvation for the Kurdish masses lay in close alliance with the Turkish workers, in a common struggle against these pernicious influences.³ And the communists rejoiced when, a little later, the moderate Turkish cabinet of Fethi Bey resigned and the revolutionary Ismet İnönü, representative of the left wing of Kemalism, became prime minister. The Comintern

¹ *Correspondance Internationale*, August 26, 1924, pp. 628-9.

² Nguyen Ai Quoc (Ho Chi-Minh), “Problèmes d'Asie”, *Correspondance Internationale*, March 14, 1925.

³ I. — “Que se passe-t-il au Kurdistan ?” *Correspondance Internationale*, March 4, 1925, p. 135.

felt that the rise of Ismet Pasha meant an intensification of the Turkish national independence struggle.⁴

Another Muslim country which continued to be interesting for the Comintern was Egypt. In spite of its violent criticisms against the anti-communist nationalist Zaglul, the International was not prepared to turn against him completely. In fact it was possible that new conflicts between Egypt and Great Britain might break out, and in that case the communists must be ready to support the objectively anti-imperialist Cairo government. The Reds tried, through propaganda and agitation, to drive the Egyptians to adopt an intransigent attitude regarding the Sudan. Approvingly, they quoted the Kemalist newspaper *Hevi*, which had written: "The independence of Egypt is not yet born. Egypt must first of all get rid of her king. Then she must drive the British into the sea. She cannot do that by means of street demonstrations. To win a real independence, she must learn how to shed blood and how to die."⁵ In the spring of 1925, when Zaglul was forced to resign, the Comintern analyzed his fall as being the result of his lack of revolutionary initiative. The new Egyptian government, headed by Zivar Pasha, was definitely conservative and pro-British. The communists decided that the Egyptian anti-imperialist movement was temporarily dead.⁶

A new hotbed of anti-imperialist troubles had arisen in the Muslim world: Arabia. The Hashemite "Caliph" Hussein, supported by the British, was becoming the object of armed attacks by various groups of Muslim purists and Arab nationalists. The main force on the anti-Husseinite side was constituted by the fanatical Wahhabites, led by Abd El Aziz Ibn Sa'ud. Starting in the Arabian desert, the purist and nationalist movement quickly spread to Transjordan, Iraq and Palestine. In Iraq, King Faizal was meeting with serious difficulties on the part of the nationalist opposition. At the end of September 1924, when Ibn Sa'ud and his Beduins stormed the walls of Mecca and raised the banner of orthodox Islam over the holy city, the Comintern gave forth a loud cheer. "Ibn Sa'ud is becoming the chief of a great national movement", wrote the *International Press Correspondence*.⁷ The International felt certain that the Wahhabite victory would stir the Muslims to revolutionary action as far as India.⁸ Grateful for the ideological support received from Moscow, Ibn Sa'ud wrote a letter to the Soviet Consul at Jedda, Hakimov, praising the Soviets for their sympathetic attitude.⁹ In February 1926, when Ibn Sa'ud was crowned King of Hedjas and

⁴ S. Brike, "A Angora", *Correspondance Internationale*, March 21, 1925, p. 174.

⁵ P. Kitaigorodsky, "Egypte et Soudan", *Correspondance Internationale*, Sept. 9, 1924, p. 671.

⁶ H.R., "Le drame du nationalisme égyptien", *Corr. Int.*, April 22, 1925, p. 300.

⁷ R.A., "En Arabie", *Corr. Internat.*, October 8, 1924, p. 768.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 528.

Nedjd, Moscow immediately granted him full recognition in his new dignity.¹⁰

The Comintern violently denounced the counter-measures taken by the Zionists against the upsurge of Arab nationalism in Palestine. When the British government, early in 1925, recognized the Jews as the predominant nationality, the Eastern Bureau of the International issued an angry proclamation, accusing the Zionist leaders and the Jewish Social Democrats of collusion with the British and with the most reactionary Arab feudalists for the purpose of exploiting and oppressing both Arab fellahin and Jewish proletarians. "The Jewish workers, sadly lacking in consciousness, follow the Ahdut Havoda (Zionist Socialists); they and the Arab fellahin kill each other off; in the meantime the Zionists and the effendis enrich themselves." The Communists demanded "the brotherly and revolutionary union of the Arab and Jewish exploitees" in common trade unions, in order to fight the British, the bourgeois Zionists and the effendis.¹¹ The proclamation was signed by the members of the Eastern Bureau, Sen Katayama, Katz, Brown, and M. N. Roy.

The Arab nationalist revolution was spreading to North Africa. The mountaineers of the Rif were raiding Spanish and French outposts. The name of Abd El Krim was in everyone's mouth. At first the uprising was limited to the Spanish zone of Morocco, and the Comintern suspected that the Kabyles were merely a tool of the French against the latter's Spanish rivals. But the rise of Abd El Krim made Moscow see the situation differently. "Abd El Krim is the chief of a Riffan independence movement. The [French] policy of corruption has failed pitifully with him and with his partisans. Abd El Krim has discovered that the most advantageous policy consists in beating the Spanish first. He is thus despoiling them of the arms and the money which he needs to found the *Republic of the Rif*. He does not agree to mortgage the freedom of his country."¹²

Occasionally the Comintern suddenly discovered instances of nationalist uprisings in half-forgotten places which usually received little or no attention. Thus, when the Albanian guerrilla chief Bairam Tsurri was shot to death by the police, the *International Press Correspondence* published a glowing necrological article.¹³

2. THE ENLARGED E.C.C.I., 1925.

From March 21 to April 6, 1925, the enlarged Executive gathered in Moscow to exchange views and lay down the strategic and tactical lines for the coming months. The presidium of the conference was

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Correspondance Internationale*, Feb. 28, 1925, p. 131.

¹² J.A.R., "Les Espagnols au Maroc", *Corr. Internat.*, April 1, 1925, p. 207.

¹³ Nicolas Mermet, "La mort d'un indomptable, Bairam Tzouri, héros de l'indépendance albanaise", *Corr. Internat.*, April 22, 1925, pp. 301-2.

headed by Stalin, Bukharin and Zinoviev. The two latter had renounced the "Western" ultra-left deviations of their past. Roy, who had similarly come closer to Stalin's views during the months which followed the fifth congress, was also a member of the presidium. The gathering appointed a committee on colonial affairs, which was composed of Dorsey, Gallaher, Bennet (England); Doriot, Marty (France); Manuilsky, Kuralsky (Russia); Grieco (Italy); Powers (U.S.A.); Moriarty (Canada); Roy (India); Semaoen (Java); Almanza (Mexico); Westphal (Germany); Wijnkoop (Holland); Yanez (Spain). The permanent Eastern Bureau was represented on the committee by the Russians Petrov and Voitinsky. Dorsey was elected president of the committee, and Roy, secretary.

Zinoviev opened the conference with a long report about the tactical tasks of the International. He rejected his former Western views. "Must the revolution continue in Europe by way of Germany? Is it not possible that we make mistakes in choosing our road?"¹⁴ Zinoviev then attacked the opinion of Trotsky, who maintained that world imperialism was being progressively concentrated in a single power bloc under the leadership of the United States. "If one maintains, as Trotsky does, that Europe is becoming a dominion of America, this is a great exaggeration."¹⁵ Imperialism is less monolithic than Trotsky thinks, Zinoviev implied. Therefore many isolated national revolutions can continue to take place. "The problem of the East is maturing at a much greater speed than we could have imagined before. In the course of the nine months which separate us from the fifth congress, the situation in the East has evolved with a particular speed. The Soviet Republics now possess a common front line with China."¹⁶

Zinoviev agreed that Lenin had been right in foreseeing that the revolution would take an Eastern rather than a Western road. "Lenin paid great attention to the East during the last years of his life. He saw very clearly that the great reserve force of revolution is approaching from the East, and that the revolution would perhaps change its route; that it would perhaps enter through another door."¹⁷ The speaker further praised certain parties for having made progress in their colonial tactics. He particularly mentioned the Communist Party of France, which had rid itself of most of its former sources of weakness.¹⁸

The French delegate Treint agreed with Zinoviev in that the C.P.F. had achieved some progress in its colonial policy, but insisted that many shortcomings remained to be corrected. "Organizationally speaking, the united front between the French communists and the national revolutionaries of the colonies still left much to be desired."¹⁹

¹⁴ *Protokoll der Erweiterten Exekutive (Moskau, 21. März-6. April 1925)*, p. 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

The colonial committee held various sessions, during which reports were heard and discussed on China, Turkey, India, Java, Egypt, the British colonies, the American colonies, and the "semi-colonies". In its appreciation of these various problems, the committee showed a complete and "astounding" unanimity of opinion.²⁰

It was decided, in regard to Java, that the communists should carry out a double task: to enlarge the proletarian basis of the movement, and, secondly, to develop their relations with the revolutionary nationalists on the basis of a democratic minimum program. This "minimum program" was to demand: 1) National independence; 2) The withdrawal of Dutch troops; 3) A people's assembly; 4) Universal suffrage; 5) The eight-hour day. To fight successfully for this program, the national-revolutionary bloc of the communists and the Sarekat Rajat should gradually move away from the right-wing nationalists.²¹

For Egypt, the committee advocated a policy of "bloc of all national-revolutionary movements against British imperialism".²² While Java was sufficiently advanced for the communists to make a distinction between right-wing and left-wing nationalists, between bourgeois and petty bourgeois, and to reject an alliance with the former, Egypt was socially backward, and the upper bourgeoisie was still deemed capable of playing a revolutionary role.

The tactics to be followed in India were similar to those applied to Java. While denouncing the opportunism of the right-wing nationalists, the Indian communists must continue to work inside the National Congress, in order to win the "petty bourgeois" left wing of the Congress over to their side. They must agitate, as before, among both workers and peasants and advocate the formation of a revolutionary people's party including workers, peasants and petty bourgeois.²³

In the Western hemisphere the communists of all countries should, according to the committee, work with all Latin American anti-imperialists, petty bourgeois revolutionaries and radical intellectuals. This should preferably be done within the framework of an anti-imperialist league, which would have local sections in every American republic.²⁴

Another resolution adopted by the enlarged E.C.C.I. concerned Yugoslavia. Inside the Yugoslav C.P., a dissident group had maintained that all national movements inside Yugoslavia were purely bourgeois, and must not be supported by the party. The C.P.Y.'s majority had decided that even bourgeois-led movements among the Croats and Slovenes deserved support, while the dissidents proposed to fight Croat and Slovene nationalism with the same vigor with which the Serbian bourgeoisie's chauvinism was being fought. Stalin personally inter-

²⁰ *Correspondance Internationale*, special number, April 28, 1925, p. 355.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*, p. 355.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

vened against the Yugoslav dissidents. He particularly criticized those who maintained that the national settlement in Yugoslavia was merely a constitutional question. Stalin insisted that in a country like Yugoslavia national strife has a very real economic and social basis in the situation of the peasantry. The national question could not be divorced from the agrarian problem. Stalin tried to subdue the fears of those dissidents who thought that agitation for national self-determination would necessarily lead to the dismemberment of Yugoslavia:

"To avoid any misunderstanding, I want to insist on this point: the right to absolute independence must not be considered as an *obligation* for the nation in question. These nations choose freely to make use or not to make use of their right. Some comrades mistakenly transform the *right* into a duty; they think that the Croats *must* at all costs demand their secession from Yugoslavia. Such a way of thinking is profoundly erroneous."²⁵

The conference thereupon decided that the attitude of the dissidents constituted "an opportunist deviation". The conference called on the Yugoslav comrades to fight this deviation, as well as that which claimed, in a Bauerist spirit, that the national problem in Yugoslavia was merely one of constitutional law, and the deviation of the elements who claimed that the unity of the country was *per se* a progressive factor which must be safeguarded and defended.²⁶

After these proposals had been accepted, the proceedings took a sentimental turn. An Indian and an Indo-Chinese student from the University of the Peoples of the East spoke words of greeting, to which Roy replied courteously and warmly. The Irishman Larkin, who had so thoroughly antagonized everyone at the fifth congress, also pronounced words of truly lamb-like sweetness and modesty. And Gallaher completed the rosy picture by stating that Rudyard Kipling, if he had seen the Comintern in action, would not have written that

"East is East and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet..."²⁷

The conference ended with a final speech by Zinoviev, who explained that "our conference has been a conference of bolshevization".²⁸ If "bolshevization" means unanimity of opinion, he was certainly right.

3. THE NEAR EAST, 1925-1926.

From April to December 1925, a large part of the Comintern's attention was focussed on the Near East. The Arab nationalist onslaught headed by Ibn Sa'ud and Abd El Krim, the radicalism of Reza

²⁵ *Correspondance Internationale*, May 20, 1925, p. 436.

²⁶ *Protokoll der Erweiterten Exekutive...*, p. 363.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

Khan in Persia, the Syrian rebellion, the Arab riots in Palestine, all led the International to believe that the day had come one which England and France would be definitely expelled from the Orient. By the end of 1925, however, the Comintern was to discover to its profound chagrin, that this was not so. Certain "anti-imperialist heroes" made various deals with the great powers and abandoned even the pretense of being revolutionaries. On the other hand, certain groups whom the International had attacked and abused suddenly were to appear in the rôle of true revolutionaries.

Full of sympathy for Abd El Krim, the International issued various proclamations against the repression in Morocco. It called on the workers of France and Spain to fight energetically against the policy of their governments; to protest against the continuation of the war in the Rif, and to demand the recognition of an independent Republic of the Rif. The Eastern Bureau of the E.C.C.I. also warned the Italian workers to be on guard lest the Duce should attempt to fish in the troubled waters of Morocco.²⁹ The fact that the French joined Primo de Rivera in the war against Abd El Krim was interpreted by the communists as proof that the Riffan leader had rejected all possible French bribes. He had received French and British arms, but instead of using them against the Spanish only, he was turning against his "benefactors" as well. Lyautey had girded his loins, blood flowed in abundance, and the Comintern ecstatically defined Abd El Krim as the great leader of all oppressed peoples of the world.³⁰

The French Communist Party had eliminated its "colonialist" elements and was carrying on very active agitation in favor of the independence of the Rif. In a speech delivered in Moscow in June, Zinoviev showered highest praise on the French communists, and particularly stressed the importance of the fiery anti-colonialist speech which the young Doriot had delivered in the Chamber of Deputies. The Comintern leader contrasted this determined attitude of the French communists with the completely soft and pro-colonialist position of the French Socialists (S.F.I.O.).³¹ He pointed out that the undignified stand of these Social Democrats had as its consequence a desertion of Socialist workers to the Communist Party, and the formation of dissident Left Socialist groups.

While the Rif war was growing more violent from day to day, the Syrian rebellion was also making progress. The Syrian rebellion had begun in Damascus, but, in accord with the usual pattern, it had spread to the countryside, involving particularly the Druze tribes. At the beginning the Comintern looked at the Druzes with misgivings, since British influence was strong among them. In general, it was possible to surmise that the hand of the British secret services showed itself not only in the Druze revolt but also in the Rif insurrection, as it did in the

²⁹ *Correspondance Internationale*, June 13, 1925, pp. 503-504.

³⁰ Ali Kemal Fouladi, "La guerre au Maroc", *Ibid.*, p. 505.

³¹ *Correspondance Internationale*, June 24, 1925, pp. 527-528.

Kurdish movement in Turkey, and in the rebellion of certain Afghan mountain tribes against the nationalist Emir Amanullah. In view of this, the Comintern hesitated before thoroughly endorsing the Druze insurrection as a legitimate national emancipation movement. But it felt that even though the British might seek to use the Druzes, the movement, once started, was likely to become autonomous and to develop into a true liberation struggle.³² K. Radek, for one, had no doubt as to the fact that British agitation among the tribes would have an effect contrary to that which the agitators expected. He believed that the Druzes would become quite independent in their aims. In the same way British efforts to control the Wahhabite movement would end in dismal failure.³³

Soon the situation developed to the point where the International could look at the troubles in the Rif and in Syrie as parts of the same movement. The Druze leaders demanded: 1) The independence of Syria; 2) A constituent assembly; 3) The withdrawal of French troops. To the communists this meant that the Druze leaders had become the true leaders of the Syrian struggle for national emancipation, and that their names deserved to be placed side by side with that of Abd El Krim.³⁴

Both in Syria and in the Rif the rebels were soon driven back into their mountain strongholds. The communists had sufficient experience in the art of guerrilla warfare to understand that this did not mean the defeat of the insurrection. In their native mountains, the Kabyle and Druze tribesmen were able to inflict heavy losses on the French troops, and in the meantime a wave of revolutionary ferment spread from the rebel strongholds to the population of the whole country, slowly creating a second guerrilla front behind Lyautey's and Gamelin's backs. Armed riots took place in Damascus, and the city was shelled heavily. The Comintern tacticians decided that the Syrian war had entered its "second phase". The "first phase" had been that of revolutionary offensive and French counter-offensive. The "second phase" was that of the gradual disintegration of French domination in all parts of the country, as a consequence of the growing hatred of all sections of the Syrian population against the destroyers of Damascus.³⁵ The case of Morocco seemed somewhat similar.³⁶

On November 10 to 12, 1925, an international conference of communist members of parliaments was held in Brussels. The con-

³² J.B., "Les troubles en Syrie", *Corr. Int.*, August 29, 1925, p. 713.

³³ K. Radek, "L'impérialisme anglais en Arabie", *Corr. Internat.*, Sept. 9, 1925, pp. 758-9.

³⁴ Kitaigorodsky, "Après le Maroc, la Syrie", *Corr. Int.*, Sept. 23, 1925, pp. 766-67.

³⁵ J.B., "La seconde étape de l'insurrection syrienne", *Corr. Int.*, Nov. 14, 1925, pp. 955-56.

³⁶ Kitaigorodsky, "La situation au Maroc et en Syrie", *Corr. Int.*, Oct. 17, 1925, pp. 829-30.

ference issued a resolution on Syria which left nothing to be desired as far as clearness in concerned:

"The conference... sends its greetings to the Syrian people in its fight for liberty. It denounces the rôle of the League of Nations...

"Down with the colonial mandates! Down with the League of Nations! Down with French and British imperialism! Long live the independence of Syria! Long live the union of the international proletariat with the oppressed peoples of the colonies!"³⁷

As the "second phase" of the Syrian war continued on the military level, the Comintern observers saw that a "second phase" was approaching on the social and political level as well. During the first outburst of the rebellion, it had been impossible to tell which classes of the Syrian population supported the French and which did not. The more static "second phase" made it clear that the privileged classes of Syria, i.e., the landed aristocracy, tended to side with the French. The "national bourgeoisie", intellectuals, middle class, peasants and proletariat were thus thrown into a struggle which bore an anti-feudal as well as a national character.³⁸

The optimism of the Comintern was not limited to Morocco and Syria, but included the Arabian peninsula, Persia, and Egypt as well. Ibn Sa'ud, continuing his offensive in the direction of Medina, looked very much like a *bona fide* anti-British nationalist. In the South of the peninsula, a war broke out between the Imam of Yemen and the Emir Idris of Azir. The latter was supported by the British, and the Comintern's observer felt that the Imam of Yemen was waging an objectively revolutionary war, even though he seemed to be encouraged or supported by Mussolini.³⁹

In Egypt a nationalist movement was arising against the pro-British government headed by Ziwar Pasha. Zaglul Pasha stood out as the dynamic leader of the nationalist front, which appeared to be preparing an armed revolution. The Comintern promptly forgave Zaglul his former hesitations and his anti-communist brutalities, and expressed its solidarity with the movement.⁴⁰

Dramatic events took place in Iran, and the International passed through a short period of high hope, only to be bitterly disappointed. The dissensions between Reza Khan and the Shah were becoming more and more pronounced. All modern-minded men in the country were rallying around the former, while the latter was only supported by the most conservative sections of the population. Moscow therefore interpreted the situation in terms of a struggle between democratic republic-

³⁷ Kitaigorodsky, "La situation au Maroc et en Syrie", *Corr. Int.*, Nov. 19, 1925, p. 966.

³⁸ J.B., "Après le bombardement de Damas", *Corr. Int.*, Nov. 25, 1925, pp. 989-90.

³⁹ J.B., "Les deux guerres d'Arabie", *Corr. Int.*, Dec. 2, 1925, p. 1005.

⁴⁰ *Corr. Int.*, Dec. 16, 1925, p. 1039.

anism and autocratic monarchism. Would Reza overthrow the Shah and proclaim the Republic? Would Reza become the Kemal of Iran? He had the means; he had the popularity; he had the support of the national-democratic party. On October 31, Reza Khan struck a bloodless blow. The Shah was forced to abdicate. All communists waited with bated breath for the proclamation of the Iranian Republic. But no such proclamation was issued. And on December 16, 1925, Reza Khan changed his title to Reza Shah Pahlevi, and mounted on the throne. Instead of a republic, he had founded a new dynasty. Very disheartened, the International Press Correspondence commented: "The Pahlevi dynasty owes its existence to a compromise with the powers of the past."⁴¹

Other disappointments were in store for the Communist International. The Arab national movement, which had seemed so magnificent, made concessions to the great powers. Ibn Sa'ud opened negotiations with the British. The Imam of Yemen sat down in the conference tent with Idris of Azir and a British envoy. The Comintern was forced to recognize that some of its former heroes were very close to being "tools" rather than independent agents. The Communist press correspondent J.B. interpreted this to mean that the spirit of Locarno (a very reprehensible thing to revolutionary minds) was penetrating the Near East. Instead of fighting each other, the imperialists were reaching agreements among each other.⁴²

In Palestine the Arabs ceased to oppose the British. England came to terms with the Arab nationalists, and it was the Jews who alone continued to represent a left-wing force in the country. In 1926, the Comintern was forced to admit that British imperialism had ceased to be pro-Zionist, and was concluding an alliance with the Arabs. This was shown by the fact that Sir Herbert Samuel was replaced by the anti-Jewish Lord Plumer as high commissioner. The International decided that the left wing of the Histadruth was henceforth destined to play a positive revolutionary role.⁴³ And the time was approaching when the Communists would be forced to stop supporting Palestinian Arab nationalism and to recognize that the Jewish workers had recovered from the "Zionist opium" and become a sort of "Jewish Bolsheviks".⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Communist Party of Palestine continued to think possible a revolutionary renewal of the Arab movement. In September 1926, the plenum of the central committee of the Party adopted a resolution in which it was said that the Arab national movement showed signs of becoming bourgeois-democratic and intellectual and of freeing itself from the stifling influence of Pan-Islamist clerical-

⁴¹ Irandoust, "Le changement de dynastie en Perse", *Correspondance Internationale*, Dec. 16, 1925, p. 1081.

⁴² J.B., "L'Esprit de Locarno dans le Proche-Orient", *Ibid.*, p. 1082.

⁴³ *Ein Jahr Arbeit und Kampf; T  tigkeit  bericht der Exekutive der K.I.. 1925-1926*, p. 359.

⁴⁴ *The C.I. Between the 5th and 6th World Congresses*, p. 417.

ism.⁴⁵ The Communists must continue to fight bourgeois Zionism, but—this was new—they must stop fighting the Histadruth, since the latter showed definite revolutionary possibilities. And the party should “encourage the Jewish intellectuals who try to effect a *rapprochement* with the Arab population, without ceasing to expose the nationalist character of the protagonists of this tendency”.⁴⁶

In spite of setbacks in the Near East, the Comintern did not lose the hope of a new revolutionary uprising among the Muslim nations. Abd El Krim continued fighting valiantly, as did the Druzes. The French C.P. issued further slogans for the struggle against repression in Morocco and Syria. In regard to Morocco, the demands were:

- “1. Immediate peace with the Rif people;
- “2. Recognition of the Rif Republic;
- “3. Military evacuation of Morocco;
- “4. Fraternization between French and Rif soldiers.”⁴⁷

At the same time, the party issued more general proclamations, calling not only for withdrawal from Morocco and Syria, but also for the liberation of all other French-dominated territories, including Alsace.⁴⁸

The success of Kemal in suppressing the Kurdish “Vendée” was also seen as a positive sign by the communist observers. These observers praised the energetic dictatorial measures which Ataturk was taking against the reactionary elements inside the country, even though they regretted the fact that these same measures were being used against communist agitators and organizers as well. The Turkish dictator had decided to include the communists in the category of “reactionaries”. This was a clever move on his part, and he succeeded in weaning most of the trade unions away from the Reds, and in placing them under nationalist leadership.⁴⁹ The International foresaw three possibilities for the further evolution of Turkey. It believed that Ataturk’s People’s Party was entering a phase of “degeneration”; i.e., that it was losing its revolutionary and popular spirit. Elements of the Right were entering the party and exerting a dangerous influence on it. One possible outcome might be that of a victory of the Right, of the great national bourgeoisie. This would be fatal to the national movement, for “the vital interests of the young nationalist bourgeoisie make it necessary for the People’s Party to show, for a long time to come, a keen distrust toward imperialist Capital”.⁵⁰ The second possible outcome would be the victory of the left wing of the Kemalist bourgeoisie. Such a victory

⁴⁵ *Correspondance Internationale*, Oct. 2, 1926, p. 1183.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 1184.

⁴⁷ *Ein Jahr Arbeit und Kampf*, p. 104.

⁴⁸ *Ein Jahr Arbeit und Kampf*, p. 108.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 355-56.

⁵⁰ B. Ferdi, “Les luttes politiques en Turquie”, *Corresp. Inter.*, Sept. 18, 1926, p. 1141.

of the Left would only be possible if the revolutionary middle class concluded a close alliance with the poor peasants and the workers, in order to complete the national democratic revolution. Such action would be highly progressive, and desirable from the communist standpoint. The third possibility lay in an independent revolutionary movement of the workers and peasants in the event of the nationalist bourgeoisie's capitulating before the forces of reaction. Such a movement would have the highest progressive significance, since it would carry Turkey past the national democratic phase toward the beginning of the socialist revolution.⁵¹

At the beginning of 1926, after the Turks had been forced to yield Mossul to the British, the Comintern hoped to see a new anti-imperialist revolutionary upsurge in Turkey. A communist commentator indicated that the Turks would only be able to hold out against British pressure if they made a close alliance with the other Asian nations, allowed the peasants to seize feudal estates, concluded a pact with the U.S.S.R., and granted autonomy to the Kurds, "after liberating them from British oppression and from their feudal and clerical institutions".⁵² When Turkey concluded a treaty of friendship with Iran, a few months later, another communist commentator hailed this event as a sign of the "reinforcement of the 'Eastern orientation' which gives the Turkish people the possibility to become the vanguard of the peoples of the Near East in their struggle for independence".⁵³

While the Comintern had completely supported Reza before he became Shah, it now took an extremely critical view of him, without, however, giving up all hope that he might still come back to his initial anti-imperialist position. The E.C.C.I. felt that the growth of a national bourgeoisie in Iran could eventually have the effect of giving a democratic content to Reza's militarist and "Caesarist" rule.⁵⁴ And when a tribal revolt broke out against the new Shah in August 1927, the *Pravda* analyzed this event as being a British plot against Iranian revolutionary nationalism. *Pravda* was of the opinion that this action was intended to frighten Reza and to make him adopt a more conciliant attitude toward British interests.⁵⁵

Thus the communists' view of the Near Eastern situation from 1925 to 1926 can be summed up as follows: a phase of overall revolutionary upsurge (Morocco, Syria, Arabia, Persia, Palestine) lasted until the end of the year 1925. Then a phase of stratification or even regression began: In Morocco and Syria the insurrection was being slowly but surely suppressed, in Arabia and Persia the nationalist leaders became

⁵¹ B. Ferdi, "Les luttes politiques en Turquie", *Corr. Int.*, Sept. 18, 1926, p. 1141.

⁵² B. Ferdi, "Le conflit anglo-turc", *Corr. Int.*, Feb. 24, 1926, pp. 211-2.

⁵³ Irandoust, "Le traité entre la Turquie et la Perse", *Corr. Int.*, May 26, 1926, p. 736.

⁵⁴ *Ein Jahr Arbeit und Kampf*, p. 358.

⁵⁵ *Correspondance Internationale*, Sept. 8, 1926, p. 1108.

hesitant and made concessions to the conservative interests; in Palestine, Arab nationalism made peace with Britain; in Turkey, Kemal Ataturk continued to suppress the counter-revolutionaries, but the communists as well. During this second phase the Comintern watched the events with an unenthusiastic but attentive eye, ready to approve of any anti-imperialist gesture, no matter how small, on the part of the nationalist leaders. The only Near Eastern country which gave the International a strong feeling of hope was Egypt, where a powerful "Zaglulist" revolution seemed to be brewing.

4. THE ENLARGED E.C.C.I., 1926.

These Near Eastern events, together with the Chinese revolution, formed the main background for the meeting of the Enlarged Executive which took place in Moscow in February and March 1926. The conference was opened on February 17, 1926 at 8 p.m. by Zinoviev, who, ever since his conversion to Stalin's viewpoint, continued to be chairman of the E.C.C.I.⁵⁶ Zinoviev pointed out, during the second session of the conference, that the countries of the East continued to move more and more into the forefront of world events, and that the Comintern should emphasize its switch of attention from the West to the East.⁵⁷ He added that up to that point certain colonial and semi-colonial countries had been badly neglected by the International. Especially the Latin American countries had not received the attention they deserved, even though their struggle against North American imperialism was becoming more significant from day to day.⁵⁸ Zinoviev ended his report by an attack on the Trotskyite Left—which defended the Western and proletarian viewpoint held by Zinoviev himself two years earlier. The Left Opposition maintained that only a "united front from below" was permissible, but not a "united front from above". In other words, the communists might seek an alliance with the rank and file of the social democrats in the West and of the nationalists in the East, but not an agreement with the social democratic or nationalist leaders. Zinoviev opposed this view. In agreement with Stalin, he argued that in the underdeveloped countries a "united front from above" with the nationalist parties could be extremely useful in pushing the national revolution toward its completion.⁵⁹ He omitted to say that a united front from above would offer the Russian state leadership a far better chance for diplomatic maneuvering than an uncontrollable and undisciplined united front of the rank and file.

During the discussion which followed the Zinoviev report, the French delegate Semard announced that in the French party, which only recently

⁵⁶ *Correspondance Internationale*, special number, March 2, 1926, p. 227.

⁵⁷ *Corr. Int.*, special number, March 9, 1926, p. 267.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Correspondance internationale*, special number, March 9, 1926, pp. 271-272.

had been praised for its new revolutionary vigor, erroneous and dangerous trends of thought had arisen. In regard to the Moroccan situation, a number of French comrades disagreed with the party's official "Leninist" line. A certain number of these deviationists declared that Abd El Krim's movement was not revolutionary but reactionary, and must not be supported by the proletarian party. They wrote that the Moroccan rebellion "was a reactionary war because Abd El Krim is a feudal chieftain" and that support should not be given to the feudal leaders but only to the poor peasants who had joined Abd El Krim's movement in the hope of achieving their social liberation.⁶⁰ In other words, the dissidents in the French party advocated what Trotsky and his followers advocated for the Comintern as a whole: to refuse a "united front from above" with the nationalist leaders, because of the feudal and backward character of the latter, and to try instead a "united front from below", which would separate the masses from their nationalist leaders. In this controversy one finds again the basic conflict between the two alternatives contained in Lenin's theses. The "Western"-minded Trotskyites and Left-wingers were favorable to the immediate establishment of soviets in the rebellious colonies, while the majority felt that the conditions for such an ultra-revolutionary policy did not exist. Since the West had failed to go socialist, it was necessary to take Lenin's second alternative; to support nationalist bourgeois leaders and even semi-barbarian chieftains like Abd El Krim in their objectively progressive struggle against imperialism; support the national democratic movement against the forces of extreme reaction and oppression. In spite of the failure of the Western revolution, the Trotskyites continued to think in terms of the proletariat, while the majority saw that for the time being the question was simply one of supporting the previous stage—the bourgeois revolution—in countries which had not yet had their 1789. This stand was reinforced by the unspoken fear that liberation of the masses from nationalist control might be accompanied by a corresponding emancipation of local communists from Russian state control. The left opposition against the Stalinist leadership attacked the latter in the name of a somewhat unrealistic doctrine of uncompromising world revolution.

In addition to their opposition to the united front from above, the French dissidents objected to the slogan of fraternization between French and Riffan soldiers. "Fraternization is not an abstraction", they argued. "It presupposes a certain economic equality of the two nations at war... Such is not the case when the workers and peasants of a capitalist imperialist power are face to face with peasants fighting for national independence under the leadership of a feudal chieftain. The slogan of fraternization should not have been proclaimed in regard to the Moroccan war."⁶¹ Taking up the most extreme "Westernism", and returning to

⁶⁰ *Corr. Int.*, special number, March 13, 1926, p. 300.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

the Luxemburg-like ideas of the first years of the International, the left dissident Lorient even maintained that Morocco and other colonies could only be emancipated by a proletarian revolution in Europe. Lorient said that it was useless to demand Moroccan independence as long as capitalism existed in France. "The evacuation of Morocco is synonymous with Revolution. Its sense is that of the dictatorship of the proletariat."⁶² In other words: France will evacuate Morocco as soon as she becomes socialist, but the Moroccans will not be able to drive out the French as long as France remains capitalist. Semard accused Lorient, Paz and the other dissidents of adding fuel to the chauvinist fury of the French bourgeoisie. Their teaching of the impossibility of Moroccan emancipation and their refusal to support the semi-feudal Abd El Krim objectively agreed with the bourgeois colonialists, who tried to suppress all manifestations of revolutionary nationalism in Morocco.⁶³

Following Semard's denunciations, the conference agreed to condemn the dissidents within the French Party.⁶⁴ A resolution against the "French Right" stated that the Lorient-Paz tendency and that of the ultra-left *Bulletin Communiste* and *Révolution Proletarienne* must be liquidated. The French party should silence the dissidents by threatening to expel them if they continued their activities. The party also should improve its internal democracy so that the minority would no longer be forced to express its opinions outside the party in bourgeois and social-democratic organs.⁶⁵

Another subject which was brought up at the February-March plenum was that of Indonesia. Semaoen charged that certain Dutch comrades working inside the Javanese party were preventing it from following a resolute revolutionary policy. He claimed that all progress the Indonesian party had ever made was due to its native members, while most of its imperfections could be blamed on its Dutch members. After these aggressive statements, Semaoen concluded with a bitter-sweet remark: wishing that "our Dutch brother party may grow and prosper".⁶⁶

The Dutch delegate Seegers, who had replaced the vitriolic Wijnkoop on the E.C.C.I., humbly agreed with Semaoen that the old central committee of the Dutch Party had indeed had Dutch nationalist and colonialist tendencies. But he insisted that the nationalist and colonial elements had been thrown out. He told Semaoen that if the latter had kept his eyes open during his recent trip to Holland, instead of walking about with his head in the clouds, he would have realized that the new

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Correspondance Internationale*, special number, March 13, 1926, p. 300.

⁶⁴ The dissidents claimed to be a "left" opposition, but Semard and the ECCI condemned them under the name of "right opposition".

⁶⁵ *Correspondance Internationale*, special number, May 25, 1926, pp. 711-712.

⁶⁶ *Corr. Int.*, special number, March 13, 1926, p. 299.

central committee was willing to support the Indonesian revolutionary movement energetically and unreservedly.⁶⁷

Roy, who was chairman of the Eastern committee of the plenum, asked the delegates to vote a Chinese resolution only, and to leave the other colonial questions to be settled by the presidium of the enlarged executive. This proposal was accepted.⁶⁸

During the period which lies between March and December 1926, the Near Eastern question, which had been so important during the previous period, passed into the background. Abd El Krim, in whom great hopes had still been placed during the February-March plenum, collapsed shortly afterwards. At the end of May 1926, the Rifian leader was forced to surrender to the French forces. The International consoled itself with the prospect that in spite of Abd El Krim's defeat, the last word had not been spoken, and that the Moroccan insurrection might continue under a different form.⁶⁹

Various other national-colonial questions came to be important in the Comintern's mind from March to December 1926—the question of India, Indonesia, Korea, Latin America, Alsace-Lorraine and others. And in the forefront of all events stood, naturally, the Chinese affair.

5. THE FAR EAST, AND INDIA, 1926-27.

In India it became obvious that Roy's analysis of the national bourgeoisie, as a hesitant and non-revolutionary force, was basically correct. The stand taken by the Swaraj group against Gandhi's tactics of non-cooperation showed that the communists would have to limit themselves to an alliance with the peasants and the lower middle class only. The Comintern was forced to admit that the Indian bourgeoisie had ceased to have vital conflicts of interests with imperialist capital. The E.C.C.I. analyzed this fact as being due to the overall stabilization and prosperity of world capitalism. It remarked that even some sections of the petty bourgeoisie were sympathetic to a policy of appeasement. The Comintern noticed, at the same time, a rise in the class consciousness of the organized workers in India. Strikes were becoming more numerous.⁷⁰ It thus seemed that a phase in the Indian national movement was over, and that the social question was becoming acute. From these conclusions, the E.C.C.I. was forced tacitly to recognize the correctness of Roy's analysis. At the end of 1926, it admitted that British imperialism had indeed changed its policy in regard to India. Instead of continuing the classical pattern of suppression of indigenous capitalist development, the colonizers were practicing a policy of cooperation with the Indian

⁶⁷ *Correspondance Internationale*, special number, March 13, 1926, p. 304.

⁶⁸ *Corr. Int.*, special number, April 16, 1926, p. 471. For Chinese resolution, see next chapter.

⁶⁹ G. Péri, "Après la reddition d'Abd el Krim", *Corr. Int.*, June 5, 1926, pp. 801-802.

⁷⁰ *Ein Jahr Arbeit und Kampf*, p. 344-348.

bourgeoisie, on the basis of British investments in the native industry. The Comintern acknowledged the wisdom of this new British policy. "This policy has yielded the desired political result, by leading to an extension of the social basis of imperialist rule... This social differentiation has brought the Indian national movement to a temporary stop."⁷¹ But the E.C.C.I. placed high hopes in the revolutionary spirit of the petty bourgeois left wing of the Swaraj party. It predicted that the left wing would achieve either one of two things. Either it would succeed in conquering the leadership of the Swaraj party and expelling the upper bourgeois "traitors", or it would be forced to form a people's party in alliance with the peasants and the proletariat. In both cases the Indian national revolution would move onward to victory.⁷²

The Indonesian situation was interpreted a little differently by the E.C.C.I. Ever since the break of the communists with the Sarekat Islam, and the formation of the Sarekat Rajat, the tactics of the Indonesian Reds had relied on a alliance with the petty bourgeoisie, but not the upper nationalist bourgeoisie. In the course of the year 1925-1926, the situation changed. Under the influence of the revolutionary events in China and in the Muslim world, the bourgeois leaders of the Sarekat Islam and the even more moderate Boedi Oetomo Party moved leftward. Nationalist revolutionary unrest became stronger than ever, not only among the lower classes but also among the bourgeoisie and especially the intellectuals. As a reaction against this intensification of nationalist feeling, the Dutch colonial administration undertook repressive measures. In the summer of 1925, the situation had evolved so far that Tjokroaminoto, the leader of the Sarekat Islam, began negotiations with the Communist Party and the Sarekat Rajat, in view of the establishment of a common anti-imperialist front. These negotiations did not lead to any concrete result, but instances of spontaneous united front manifestations occurred at the level of the rank-and-file.⁷³ Not only the Sarekat Islam took a step to the left, but also the Boedi Oetomo, which withdrew its representatives from the "Volksraad"—the consultative parliament of the Javanese colony. While the Comintern was very pleased by these developments, it did not lose from sight certain dangers inherent in the new situation. The E.C.C.I. was aware of the fact that certain radical nationalists stayed away from the communists and from other groups, and tried to wage their own anti-Dutch fight by means of terrorism. The communists warned the nationalists against the practice of individual terrorism, which seldom brought any good results. Usually individual terrorist acts merely had the character of provocation; instead of furthering the overall cause, they weakened it, by giving the counter-revolutionaries a pretext for repressive action. The main terrorist group against whose provocative activities the Communist Party of Indonesia warned its allies, was the mysterious "Section B" of the

⁷¹ *Taetigkeitsbericht der Exekutive der K.I.* (Feb.-Nov., 1926), pp. 163-164.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁷³ *Ein Jahr Arbeit und Kampf*, p. 361.

Sarekat Islam which specialized in the assassination of Dutch police officers and of their native collaborators. The E.C.C.I. instructed the Communist Party to follow a policy of only limited confidence in the Islamic nationalists. Even though it might be possible to cooperate with the latter for a certain period of time, the basic strategy of the party must tend toward the revolutionary organization of the broad peasant masses. The Sarekat Rajat, according to the E.C.C.I., was too closely identified with the Communist Party. It must be given a more independent character, so that it could constitute the basis for a large people's party encompassing the workers, the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie.⁷⁴ Thus the Communist Party of Indonesia must act on two levels: first, it must organize a revolutionary party of the workers, peasants and petty bourgeoisie; secondly, it must seek a temporary alliance with the nationalist bourgeoisie.

These tactics were crowned with success. The peasants came flooding into the Sarekat Rajat, and the negotiations with the Sarekat Islam and Boedi Oetomo finally yielded concrete results. Even though the Communist Party of Indonesia was by this time an illegal organization, it succeeded in August 1926, in forming a National Liberation Committee together with the leaders of the Sarekat Islam and the Boedi Oetomo.

But the alliance with the bourgeois elements did not last long. Within the Indonesian Communist Party and the Sarekat Rajat, the terrorist and extremist wing was too strong. The party itself was divided. While Tan Malaka and Semaoen, who were in personal touch with Moscow and resided outside their own country, tried to preserve the tactics of a united front with the nationalists, those among the communist leaders who had remained inside the country were hostile to a policy which implied waiting and moderation. At the end of 1925 already, a Communist Party conference at Solo had decided to start an armed rebellion in the course of the year 1926. The party leader Alimin, who had presided the Solo conference, informed Tan Malaka of these projects in 1926. Tan Malaka strongly opposed a policy which was more "putschist" than truly revolutionary.⁷⁵ Instead of organizing a limited insurrection, the party must continue to seek to gain the masses, and wait until the overall situation had become revolutionary, Tan Malaka argued. In January 1926, he declared that the revolution can only break out in Indonesia when the people's dissatisfaction has reached the point of explosion. The revolution would be victorious "when a nation of fifty-five million men prefers death to the life of slaves and laughs at the sight of mounted policemen armed with rubber truncheons; when the prisons open and the leaders are liberated; when the railwaymen and dock workers refuse to take their leaders into exile; when the soldiers refuse to open fire on the unarmed masses;

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 362-364.

⁷⁵ Blumberger, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

when the Europeans go to bed with a gun and dare not eat food that has not been analyzed by a chemist.”⁷⁶ In other words, Tan Malaka (and Moscow) differed from Alimin in the evaluation of mass support: Alimin had a local, tactical concept of revolution, while Tan Malaka saw the revolution not as an uprising of an armed minority, but as the socially and economically determined upheaval of tens of millions of human beings seeking their basic dignity.

But the activist and terrorist wing of the party and the Sarekat Rajat could not be stopped. In the evening of November 12, 1926, armed bands opened fire on the police and government troops in Batavia, Tangerang, Bantam, Priangan, Soerakarta, Banjoemas, Pekalongan, Kedoe, Kediri. The great Java insurrection had broken out.

Even though this insurrection had a basically “putschist” character and ran counter to the general line laid down by the E.C.C.I., the International had to support it fully. On November 21, the E.C.C.I. issued a proclamation to all workers of the world, requesting them to show their solidarity with the Indonesian revolutionaries in both words and deeds.⁷⁷ Rather than to admit that the outbreak of the rebellion might be due to “putschist” tendencies on the part of Alimin and other leaders, communist spokesmen declared that the terrorist repression carried out by the colonial administration had pushed the masses to revolt. According to Semaoen’s official statements, the rebellion was a true “national popular uprising”, carried on by the masses of workers, peasants, petty bourgeois and intellectuals. The colonialist repression had “forced the communists to take over the leadership” of the movement. In order to counter possible accusations of ultra-leftism, Semaoen emphasized the fact that the rebellion and its slogans were of a purely national-democratic and not of a proletarian class nature.⁷⁸

In Korea, the Communists continued the policy of cooperation with all nationalist revolutionaries against the Japanese occupants. Since all sections of the Korean population were equally oppressed by the Japanese, there was no hesitation even among the bourgeoisie. By 1926, the dissensions which had formerly existed among various nationalist groups was overcome, and a united National Party was being formed. In accordance with E.C.C.I. instructions, the Korean communists joined that party and constituted its left wing.⁷⁹

The various nationalist groups in French Viet-Nam also fused into larger associations in 1926. The most revolutionary of these groups, strongly infiltrated by the Communists, was the “Young Viet-Nam”.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Blumberger, *op. cit.*, p. 78. See also V. Thompson, *The Left Wing in S.E. Asia*, p. vi.

⁷⁷ *Correspondance Internationale*, Nov. 28, 1926, p. 1560.

⁷⁸ Semaoen, “L’insurrection en Indonésie”, *Corr. Int.*, Dec. 1, 1926, p. 1576.

⁷⁹ Kim Sa Hom, “Une démonstration nationale japanophobe en Corée”, *Correspondance Internationale*, Aug. 18, 1926, p. 1037.

⁸⁰ XX., “Le mouvement révolutionnaire en Indochine”, *Corr. Int.*, Aug. 14, 1926, 1012-1013.

6. LATIN AMERICA, 1926-1927.

As Zinoviev had indicated in his report to the February-March Plenum of the E.C.C.I., Latin America was undergoing a revolutionary development. The most interesting country in this respect was Mexico.

President Calles, who had succeeded the moderate social democrat Obregón in 1925, was revolutionary-minded. He continued Obregón's program of vigorous social and agrarian reform and took up the gauntlet against clerical feudalism and United States interventionism. The third congress of the Mexican Communist Party, meeting in 1925, had voted the "opportunist" elements out of its central committee. These "opportunists" had gone too far in their support of the radicalism of Obregón and Calles. Instead of preserving the separate class character of the Communist Party, they had merely followed the leadership of the "petty bourgeois" social-democrats in the national revolution. But while clearing out these right-wing elements, the Mexican party went too far to the Left. The third congress, misinterpreting the theses of the fifth Comintern congress regarding European social-democracy, drew up the following outmoded thesis: that President Calles, as a social-democratic reformer, was merely the "left hand of North American imperialism" (the "right hand" being fascism). This thesis is in agreement with what the International thought about social-democracy at the time, but the Mexican Party forgot that Calles was not simply a "social-democrat" but something more: a revolutionary nationalist in a "semi-colonial" country. The Mexican communists thus arrived at the absurd conclusion that "the Mexican 'workers' government is simply the gendarme of the American petroleum companies and big business".⁸¹ A total break with the bourgeoisie, including the latter's most radical elements, was carried out. Obviously such a policy was bound to lead the Mexican Communist Party to isolation, and it realized its mistake within a year of its third congress. The fourth congress of the party, held in 1926, corrected the line, and stated that Calles was relatively progressive and must be supported by the workers and peasants. Such support would make him give up his hesitations and turn him into a wholehearted fighter for Mexican national liberation from United States imperialism. The communists must exert all their influence to drive Calles to accept the slogan "all land for the peasants". Thus linked to the agrarian social revolution, the Mexican national revolution would be invincible.⁸² Stirner, who had represented Mexico at the fifth Comintern congress, was not pleased with the idea of supporting Calles even conditionally. He admitted that the communists must support him whenever he took up arms against the Church or the United States, but he warned that the proletarians and peasants must

⁸¹ B.C. Wolfe, "La bolchévisation et les devoirs actuels du PC mexicain", *Correspondance Internationale*, June 27, 1925, p. 541.

⁸² *The C.I. from the Fifth to the Sixth Congress*, p. 366.

remain on guard every moment, lest they be drawn into a treacherous compromise with petty bourgeois democracy.⁸³ And at the end of the year he wrote angrily that the Mexican petty bourgeoisie was not at all revolutionary. He proposes that the communists enter into complete opposition against Calles and demand a workers' and peasants' government.⁸⁴ But another wing of the Mexican party was favorable to cooperation with Calles. They argued that even if the President had many moments of weakness, "nevertheless, he is the first of all presidents of Mexico to try to carry out a national revolutionary program; to try to develop the national economy independently of foreign capital".⁸⁵ Calles had done what Obregón had not dared to do: he had taken up the open fight against the forces of reaction, and had thus burned the bridges behind him.

The E.C.C.I. gave its endorsement to the viewpoint which considered Calles as a progressive element, to be critically supported. It agreed that the future orientation of the Mexican president depended on whether or not he was pushed ahead on the anti-imperialist course by the workers and peasants.⁸⁶

While communist influence remained strong in the peasant organizations, the Mexican labor movement continued to be divided among different political tendencies. The main trade union federation, C.R.O.M. (Mexican Regional Workers' Confederation), was dominated by social-democratic Calles supporters. The textile workers were mostly anarchist. On the other hand the communists had succeeded in establishing their ideological domination over the petroleum workers. The state of Veracruz was the main Communist Party stronghold.⁸⁷

Not only in Mexico but also in other Latin American countries the communists achieved results during this period. The Pan-American Anti-Imperialist League, which was a communist front organization, including not only communists and radicals but also conservative nationalists, tried to coordinate the national-revolutionary movements of all Latin American countries. Some of the executive officers of the League were still to play an important role in the Latin American Left of later years: Julio Antonio Mella (Cuba), Juan de Dios Romero (Colombia), Gustavo Machado (Venezuela), Enrique Flores (Mexico), Eduardo Matos (Brazil). In March 1926 the League protested against the United States arbitration in the Arica dispute, and demanded that the Latin Americans be left to settle their own affairs without foreign intervention.⁸⁸

⁸³ H. Stirner, "La situation au Mexique et la lutte contre l'Eglise catholique", *Corr. Int.*, July 21, 1926, p. 927.

⁸⁴ *Correspondance internationale*, Dec. 4, 1926, pp. 1598-99.

⁸⁵ J. Wilenkin, "La lutte du gouvernement et des ouvriers mexicains contre l'Eglise catholique et l'impérialisme américain", *Corr. Int.*, Nov. 28, 1926, p. 1558.

⁸⁶ *The C.I. Between the Fifth and Sixth Congress*, p. 363.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁸⁸ *Correspondance internationale*, March 13, 1926, pp. 287-288.

The Comintern took an interest in Venezuela, which was groaning under the despotism of General J. V. Gómez. The Venezuelan liberal and left-wing movement was beginning to acquire strength and experience. Intellectuals exiled in Cuba published the democratic newspaper *Venezuela Libre*. The Comintern press reprinted various accounts of the pre-medieval tortures endured by liberals in the Venezuelan jails, and tried to stir up world opinion against Gómez.⁸⁹

In Cuba, a Communist Party was founded through the consolidation of previously existing communist groups, in 1925. The party was gaining influence in the trade union movement, and among the peasants also. It was illegal, but nevertheless succeeded in being one of the most efficient and active of all Latin American Comintern sections.⁹⁰

The Socialist (Communist) Party of Colombia was affiliated to the Comintern as a sympathising section, from 1924 on. The E.C.C.I. recognized that this party showed good will and had a certain influence among the masses, but also had to point out important mistakes in its tactics. The Colombian communists had decided that they would not participate in parliamentary action.⁹¹ Such a policy naturally kept the party in isolation and reduced it to a sort of revolutionary sect.

In Brazil the Communist Party was developing steadily. Sometimes it emerged into legality for brief periods but most of the time it was outlawed. Since in Brazil there existed no other proletarian groups which could compete with the Communists, the latter soon dominated the trade union movement.⁹²

7. EUROPE, 1926-1927.

On the European continent certain events indicated that the Comintern theses on the national question were not exclusively applicable to the overseas colonies. Four areas came to the attention of the communist tacticians: Ireland, Alsace-Lorraine, Catalonia, and Macedonia.

In Macedonia, terrorist uprisings against Greece, and occasionally against Bulgaria, became more frequent. The Macedonian national liberation organization, O.R.I.M., had split into two branches. The main branch, led by Todor Panitza, fought for the total independence of Macedonia. The other branch had strong fascist tendencies and was pro-Bulgarian. The Communist International praised Panitza for killing the fascist dissidents and for trying to keep the O.R.I.M. in a purely Macedonian revolutionary line. The communists were exhorted to support Todor Panitza and the progressive wing of the O.R.I.M.⁹³

⁸⁹ G. Korsounski, "Les horreurs du Venezuela", *Correspondance internationale*, October 20, 1926, p. 1274.

⁹⁰ *The C.I. Between the Fifth and Sixth Congress*, pp. 369-372.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 375-376.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 399.

⁹³ *Correspondance internationale*, Oct. 17, 1925, pp. 831-832.

The Irish Communist Party, which had dwindled into nothingness, had been officially dissolved in 1924. The fiery Larkin, who had been a worker in the United States for several years, had founded a new group—the Irish Workers' League. In April 1926, the Workers' League was transformed into the Workers' Party of Ireland. This new party was basically communist, even though its leaders lacked a Marxist theoretical education. In any event the International looked at it with great sympathy.⁹⁴

As we mentioned above, the February-March Plenum of the E.C.C.I. had admonished the French Communist Party to fight the "right" (left) opposition in its own ranks and to demand the complete right of secession of all French-dominated foreign territories. The E.C.C.I. had particularly mentioned, not only Morocco and the overseas colonies, but also Alsace-Lorraine in that connection. Among the Alsatian petty bourgeoisie an autonomist movement, known as the Heimatbund, was agitating for the respect of Alsatian national peculiarities, and protesting against "gallification". The autonomist movement had been founded, and was partly led, by conservative Catholic elements.⁹⁵ It is easy to understand that some members of the French Communist Party felt astounded if not indignant, when the Comintern press supported this basically clerical autonomist movement. The French Communist Party was told to make an alliance with the clerical conservatives of Alsace against the Radicals and Socialists (who opposed Alsatian autonomy)!⁹⁶ This odd behavior on the part of the International was certainly partly due to the Marxists' stubborn belief in German revolutionary fervor and French petty bourgeois passivity.

On a more serious level, there was the question of the separatist movement in Catalonia. In 1926, Catalan nationalist extremists tried to carry out a coup d'état. They failed, but their attempt showed that separatist unrest was spreading. The Spanish Communist Party decided to support the nationalist extremists wholeheartedly, together with the anarchists. Communists and anarchists tried to convince the Catalan people that only the armed proletariat could lead the nation in revolt against Madrid, and that the national revolution of Catalonia must be a social revolution as well.⁹⁷

For a certain time, European communists had considered the idea of forming an international anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist organization, which would seek to gather all anti-imperialist intellectuals, not only of the Left, but of the liberal bourgeoisie as well. The Germans had taken the initiative in this respect, by founding a "League

⁹⁴ *Tätigkeitsbericht der Exekutive der K.I., Februar-November 1926*, p. 92.

⁹⁵ Who were annoyed by the French Republic's Laïc schools and similar "godless" and "Jacobin" institutions.

⁹⁶ H. Stenger, "Le mouvement d'autonomie en Alsace-Lorraine", *Correspondance internationale*, July 7, 1926, pp. 891-892.

⁹⁷ Jar, "La tentative de putsch des séparatistes catalans", *Ibid.*, November 28, 1926, pp. 1560-1561.

Against Colonial Atrocities and Oppression". At the end of 1926, this league, in which communists held most of the leading positions, decided to call in an international anti-colonialist conference. The points to be discussed at such a conference were the following:

- 1) Reports on imperialist oppression in various colonies.
- 2) Reports on liberation movements in various colonies, and on the amount of aid these movements receive from workers' movements in capitalist countries.
- 3) Co-ordination of national struggles with social struggles.
- 4) Creation of an international anti-imperialist league.⁹⁸

Various national liberation movements from non-European countries were invited and promised to attend. Among these movements was the Kuomintang, and also organizations from India, Egypt, the Sudan, South Africa, West Africa. American Negro organizations also promised to send delegates.⁹⁹

As far as the revolutionary development of the Negroes was concerned, two main events took place. In the United States, the Communist Party had succeeded in calling in a congress of Negro workers, in Chicago. This congress had voted extremely revolutionary resolutions, proclaiming the solidarity of American colored workers with the oppressed peoples of the colonies and with the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁰ In South Africa, revolutionary progress was also made. The trade union organization of the Negro workers, the I.C.U. (Industrial and Commercial Union), at its annual congress in 1926, adopted resolutions against race segregation, against imperialism and against the League of Nations.¹⁰¹

8. THE SEVENTH PLENUM.

These events of the year 1926 were discussed and analyzed at the seventh plenary conference of the enlarged E.C.C.I. This conference, which held its first session in Moscow on November 22, 1926, was presided by Bukharin, who had come to be Stalin's principal lieutenant. Bukharin, who in the past had been the ultra-internationalist, the man who had proclaimed the futility of all national emancipation struggles in a world of class conflict, was now the faithful follower of the "Eastern" Stalin. He was the principal defender of Stalin's policy of collaboration with the nationalist bourgeoisie of the East. Zinoviev

⁹⁸ Willy Münzenberg, "Pour une conférence coloniale", *Corr. Int.*, Aug. 14, 1926, p. 1011.

⁹⁹ The Anti-Imperialist League was joined by a number of the world's most distinguished liberal intellectuals, including Albert Einstein, who withdrew after he perceived the communist leadership's sectarian character.

¹⁰⁰ Rabinovitch, "Le congrès des ouvriers noirs américains", *Corr. Int.*, Dec. 23, 1925, pp. 1075-1076.

¹⁰¹ J. Shields, "Deux congrès syndicaux dans l'Afrique du Sud", *Corr. Int.*, May 26, 1926, pp. 737-738.

had fallen into disgrace. He had joined Trotsky in the camp of the Left Opposition, demanding a return to the proletarian internationalism of the old days. In the very first session of the November plenum, a letter was read in which Zinoviev asked to be relieved of the chairmanship of the International, "as well as, for the moment, of any other kind of work in the International". This was accepted unanimously, and the presidium of the conference was made up entirely of Stalin supporters: Bukharin, Manuïlsky, Tan Pin-san, Klara Zetkin, Sen Katayama, M. N. Roy, Otto Kuusinen, and a number of others, including Stalin himself. Among the Russian members of the presidium, there was a relative newcomer: Molotov.¹⁰² The seventh plenum was particularly concerned with the Chinese question, so that the other underdeveloped countries received only very slight attention. The general analysis of the world situation, given by Bukharin, declared that world capitalism was reaching the end of its period of "stabilization" and that signs of economic, social and political tensions were growing more frequent throughout the world.¹⁰³ The delegates thereupon vied with each other in naming concrete examples of capitalist non-stabilization and in proposing ways and means to assist in the de-stabilization of the enemy system. The Latin American countries must give a stronger measure of support to the petty bourgeois national-revolutionaries. The latter would thus be pushed farther to the Left, and "with proper consideration of the revolutionary experiences in colonial countries (China, Indonesia, etc.) we can transform Central and South America into strongpoints against the stabilization in Europe, strongpoints of the world revolution".¹⁰⁴ Bukharin had indicated that there were three fronts on which the forces of revolution were advancing: England, China, and the U.S.S.R.¹⁰⁵ The English general strike, the Chinese revolution, the economic and political consolidation of the Soviet Union were three highways along which the armies of the toilers converged toward the fortress of imperialism. To these three revolutionary fronts, Roy added others: Anglo-American economic rivalry, and the disintegration of the British colonial empire.¹⁰⁶ In regard to the factor of disintegration of the British Empire, Roy came back to his famous thesis on "decolonization". India, he said, was rapidly developing its own native capitalism. England needed to export capital. And the more England exported to India, the more the relationship of India to England was transformed from a colonial relationship into one between two rival capitalist countries.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² He had been but little known before. Trotsky considered him extremely stupid. Cf. Trotsky, *La Troisième Période d'Erreurs de l'I.C.*, p. 42.

¹⁰³ *Correspondance Internationale*, Dec. 1, 1926, pp. 1583-1591.

¹⁰⁴ *Protokoll der erweiterten Exekutive der Komintern*, 22. Nov. bis 13. Dez. 1926, p. 221.

¹⁰⁵ *Correspondance Internationale*, Dec. 1, 1926, p. 1584.

¹⁰⁶ *Protokoll der erweiterten Exekutive der Komintern*, pp. 278-279.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

After this, the discussion centered around China. China had become the focus of the struggle of the Comintern, and the basic practical field of application of the theses on the national and colonial question. While in the course of the years 1925 and 1926 certain other national questions—the Near East, Indonesia—had still played an important role, the beginning of 1927 brought about a complete identification of the national and colonial problem with the Chinese situation. The correctness of Lenin's theses, the whole future course of revolutionary development in the world—these were being tested in the colossal events which were shaking a country of 500,000,000 inhabitants to its very foundations and ringing in a new phase of human history.

VII

THE COMINTERN AND CHINA

In a previous chapter we have mentioned the sympathy with which Lenin had looked at Sun Yat-sen even before the first World War, and the friendliness of the Comintern toward the Doctor's Kuomintang movement. But up to 1924, China had played only a very secondary rôle in the concern of the International. India had seemed to be the country of prospective revolution, not China.

1. THE CANTON-HONGKONG STRIKE.

In the course of the year 1924, this situation changed entirely. The Kuomintang, which up to then had merely been a small and uninfluential revolutionary movement in Southern China, grew into a mighty force, and became the carrier of all progressive trends of the country. The Comintern delegate, Borodin, who had been appointed "instructor and re-organizer of the Kuomintang" at the end of 1923, had worked out a new program for the Chinese revolution. Before that period, Sun Yat-sen had attempted to liberate and unify China through mere military force. Borodin made it clear to him that a national revolution was doomed to failure unless it was based on large popular mass support. He explained to Dr. Sun that the three "People's Principles" (Nationalism, Democracy, and People's Livelihood) had to be given a social class content. Borodin saw the Chinese situation in terms of a bourgeois revolution, carried out by the "national bourgeoisie" (native anti-foreign industrialists), the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry, and the proletariat. Under Borodin's supervision a tactical program was worked out, which foresaw: 1) Cooperation of the Kuomintang with the Chinese Communist Party and with the Soviet Union; 2) Anti-imperialism; and 3) A social reform program for the workers and peasants.¹ Before this time, Sun Yat-sen had believed that the total independence of China could be won by appealing to the humanitarian sentiments of the great powers, and that a land reform could be effected without harm to the feudal landlords. But by 1924, Dr. Sun's conversion to the ideas of mass support and of class strategy was complete. He was also convinced of the correctness of the alliance with the communists and the Soviet State. In November 1924, he spoke at a Pan-

¹ L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 640.

Asiatic Congress held in Tokyo, and explained that in his opinion, "Russia believes in benevolence and righteousness, not in force and utilitarianism. She is an exponent of justice, and does not believe in the principle that a minority should oppress a majority".² In line with Borodin's suggestions, the Kuomintang agreed to a 25% reduction of land rents and to the formation of peasant unions. The rent reduction was not put into practice, but the formation of peasant unions was. These peasant unions were an excellent instrument for communist agitation, and could be looked at as embryonic soviets.

The Chinese Communist Party, born out of the "May Fourth Movement" (1920), and originally led by Professor Chen Tu-hsiu, had agreed in 1922 to let its members join the Kuomintang on an individual basis. At first Sun had refused to accept the principle of dual party membership, but the Dutch-Indonesian Maring had convinced him to abandon his objections. Maring had in mind the example of the cooperation between the C.P. of Indonesia and the Sarekat Islam and Sarekat Rajat, and foresaw a similar development in China.³

In January 1924, the first national congress of the Kuomintang discussed the re-organization of the party. The communist members of the Kuomintang had been extremely active, and held various leading positions. Under their influence, the congress voted at a large majority to use the structure of the Bolshevik party as a model for the re-organization of the Kuomintang. At the same time another important step was taken by Borodin: he organized the military academy of Whampoa, in which nationalist officers were to be trained by Russian instructors. General Gallen (Bluecher) of the Red Army arrived in Canton to become chief military advisor of the nationalist army.

Sun Yat-sen, in 1923, had had the idea to launch a great Northern expedition in the direction of Peking, to destroy the warlord Wu Pei-fu, who was on good terms with the British and the Americans. After defeating Wu Pei-fu, he would continue toward Manchuria and fight the mighty warlord Chang Tso-lin, who was influenced by the Japanese. Borodin made it clear to Sun that such an expedition must not be undertaken before the nationalist movement had succeeded in growing strong social roots in the area it controlled.

There cannot be any doubt that the communists' suggestions for turning the nationalist movement into a huge mass revolution had immediate effects. The Canton workers flocked to the aid of the Kuomintang whenever it was being attacked. In the course of the year 1924 to 1925, the Cantonese crushed three attacks by the armies of reactionary warlords, or by counter-revolutionary conspirators. In the summer of 1924, an uprising of rich merchants against the revolutionary government was suppressed. In February 1925, the nationalist forces beat the troops of the warlord Chen Chiung-ming.

² L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 640.

³ H. Isaacs, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution*, p. 61.

And in May 1925 they inflicted a shattering defeat on the Yunnanese generals Yang Hsi-min and Liu Chen-han.

On May 30, 1925, an anti-foreign student demonstration took place in Shanghai. The police of the British concession settlement, fearing acts of violence against foreigners, opened fire, and a dozen students were killed. An immense indignation ran through all layers of Shanghai's Chinese society, and a general strike broke out. All Chinese workers, including domestic servants, participated in the movement.

The strike movement was not limited to Shanghai. It quickly spread to Canton and to Hongkong. The direct cause of the Hongkong and Canton strike was the shooting, by British soldiers, of 169 students and workers, on the occasion of a nationalist riot.

The Hongkong strike had a very revolutionary, completely political character. Hongkong was paralysed. Britain's China trade appeared doomed. Cries of woe echoed from the walls of the world's banks. The British residents in Hongkong sent out messages of distress, announced that they expected to be massacred from one minute to the next, and called for help. British warships took up positions in the harbor of Hongkong, and patrolled up and down the South China coast.

The Canton workers set up a strikers' delegates' committee, which was almost equivalent to a soviet.⁴ The workers' committee, in cooperation with the governmental executive committee of the Kuomintang, organized the distribution of food as best it could. The preservation of order was in the hands of the trade unions. Within the Kuomintang, Borodin and his associates tried by all means to push the government to decisive and irrevocable anti-imperialist steps. They succeeded in making the Canton government pass a decree by which the port of Canton was closed to all vessels carrying merchandise for Hongkong. In order to insure the Hongkong strike's total effectiveness, the Kuomintang called on the workers of that port to come to Canton. 100,000 coolies followed this call. And while the whole world looked on with bated breath, the Hongkong-Canton strike continued. The workers refused to discuss economic demands. They asked for nothing less than for the departure of the Europeans from China. And this strike lasted for sixteen months!⁵

2. COMINTERN-KUOMINTANG RELATIONS.

Before the outbreak of the great strike, the interest of the Comintern in China had been rather limited. Contradictory views about the importance of China clashed within the E.C.C.I. As late as November 1924, A. Joffe (who had been Soviet Russia's first envoy to China), thought that it would take very long for that country to break out into

⁴ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁵ For a splendid account of the atmosphere of those days, see A. Malraux, *Les Conquérants*.

a real nationalist revolution. He expressed the view that the victory of Feng Yu-san⁶ over Wu Pei-fu⁷ was already as progressive an event as one could hope for, at the moment.⁸ And even in March 1925, when Sun Yat-sen died, the Comintern did not yet suspect that two months later the work of the Doctor would find its justification in a huge revolutionary and nationalist outburst. Nonetheless, in his necrologue for Sun Yat-sen, Zinoviev evaluates the Doctor's lifework in glowing terms. "Sun Yat-sen cannot be compared to Gandhi any more. Gandhi has more and more, during these last few years, followed a declining curve. Sun Yat-sen, on the contrary, had not ceased to follow a rising political curve." Zinoviev ends by stating the Dr. Sun is a shining example to prove Lenin's dictum about "advanced Asia" as contrasted with "backward Europe".⁹

The E.C.C.I. reacted swiftly to the Shanghai events and to the outbreak of the great political strike. Zinoviev declared that the Shanghai events clearly marked the beginning of the national revolution in China and indicated furthermore that the proletariat, in spite of the fact that it only made up a small percentage of the Chinese population, was destined to play the leading role in the national revolution.¹⁰ In fact, this first outbreak was definitely dominated by the workers. They were the leaders and organizers of the revolutionary activities in Shanghai and Canton. The Chinese railway workers' union took the initiative to send an appeal to the International Transport Workers' Federation: Stop the imperialists from intervening in China!¹¹

At the same time the central committee of the Chinese Communist Party issued a manifesto, in which it declared that it had the following duties: "1) To transform the present movement into a permanent action for the liberation of China from foreign domination. 2) To make all Chinese classes, and above all the popular masses, take part in the national revolution."¹²

The proletarian and communist leadership in the nationalist movement alarmed the right wing of the Kuomintang. Even though the workers and the communists had not said a word about social revolution and were carrying on a policy of cooperation with the nationalist bourgeoisie, the rightists were afraid. The 100,000 workers who had come to Canton from Hongkong, and who were being armed by the Kuomintang, were a terrible reminder of the fact that the revolution might not

⁶ Warlord, known as the "Christian general"; temporarily friendly toward Moscow; subsidized by the Comintern; but a very unreliable ally.

⁷ Warlord; subsidized by the British; temporarily under American influence; enemy of the Japanese-subsidized Chang Tso-lin.

⁸ *Correspondance Internationale*, Nov. 13, 1924, p. 863.

⁹ Zinoviev, "Sun Yat-sen est mort", *Correspondance Internationale*, March 24, 1925, p. 177.

¹⁰ Zinoviev, "La portée mondiale des événements de Shanghai", *Corr. Int.*, June 16, 1925, pp. 511-512.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, June 16, 1925, p. 513.

¹² *Corr. Int.*, June 24, 1925, p. 529.

always be purely national. The extreme right wing of the Kuomintang decided to act before it was too late. On August 20, 1925, Liao Chung-kai, chairman of the leftist Workers' and Peasants' Section of the Kuomintang, was assassinated by order of General Hu Han-min of the extreme right, militarist wing of the party. Borodin immediately succeeded in rallying the majority of the Kuomintang to take action against the conspirators. The central committee appointed a special triumvirate with dictatorial powers to keep discipline and continue the revolution. This committee of three was composed of Wang Ching-wei, one of the leftists of the Kuomintang, Su Sun-chi, another leftist, and the brilliant commander of the Whampoa Cadets: Chiang Kai-shek. The latter thus became virtually commander-in-chief of the nationalist armies, while Hu Han-min retained nominal command. With his cadets, Chiang carried out a raid against the reactionary or unreliable elements of the army and disarmed them. The Whampoa cadets, under the orders of Chiang, who in his turn was supervised by Borodin and by the central committee of the Kuomintang, took over all officers' posts in the army. Thus the right-wing conspiracy had only succeeded in provoking immediate retaliation, and in placing the whole nationalist apparatus under left-wing domination.

But the right-wing elements swiftly adjusted to the new conditions. Two months after assassinating Liao Chung-kai, General Hu Han-min, who had been sent to Moscow to freshen up his ideas, was voicing highly revolutionary sentiments and writing for the Comintern press.¹³

Organizational links between the Kuomintang and Comintern-dominated organizations increased. Communist members of the Kuomintang and of other nationalist-revolutionary groups of the Far East called in a conference of representatives of various colonial nations, to decide on common action. In November 1925, representatives of the Kuomintang, the Womens' Emancipation League, the Association of Revolutionary Telephone Operators, the National Labor Union (China), the Peasants' Union of Kwantung, the League of Young Revolutionary Soldiers of China, and the Cadets of the National Army met in Canton with delegates of Indian, Vietnamese and Korean national-revolutionary organizations. The conference decided to found an International Association of Oppressed Peoples (I.A.O.P.), and to fight against the use of soldiers belonging to one colonial nation against the people of another. The domination of the communist nucleus over this national-revolutionary mass organization is shown clearly by the appeal issued by the I.A.O.P. conference. The appeal was directed at "the international proletariat and the oppressed peoples".¹⁴ The I.A.O.P. also established contact with the Intercolonial Union in France,¹⁵ the African Brotherhood in the United States, and other organizations.

¹³ Cf. *Correspondance internationale*, November 11, 1925, p. 931.

¹⁴ G. Lai-Shaw, "Le mouvement anti-impérialiste dans l'Extrême-Orient", *Correspondance internationale*, December 9, 1925, p. 1031.

¹⁵ Headed by Ho Chi-Minh.

The communist influence in Canton was thus quite preponderant. The question of future tactics now became acute for the Comintern. On the one hand the conspiracy of the rightists had shown that the nationalist bourgeoisie was not a very sure ally. On the other hand the communist forces were much too weak to break the alliance with the bourgeoisie, and to work for an immediate passage of the revolution into its "higher phase"—the soviet phase. As long as revolutionary control was limited to the province of Kwantung alone, the bourgeoisie needed the communists, and the communists needed the bourgeoisie, to resist the attacks of the Northern reactionaries. Borodin and his associates felt that the national bourgeoisie in the Kuomintang was not only a necessary ally—since the communists were too weak to act alone—, but also a fairly reliable one, as long as the nationalist movement was threatened by the counter-revolutionary warlords, and needed the strength of the communist-dominated workers.

The Trotskyist Opposition did not see the situation in the same light. It felt that the bourgeoisie was such an uncertain ally that membership in the Kuomintang would be more of a danger than an advantage to the communists. While Borodin (in agreement with Stalin and Bukharin) proposed *first* to extend the revolution and *then* to "deepen" it, the Trotskyists felt that the revolution was *already* entering its higher phase, and that the communists should immediately push it onward, separately from the Kuomintang.

The Stalin-Bukharin majority, certain that the Opposition was over-estimating the force of the Chinese proletariat, and looking at China as though it were an advanced industrial country, decided that the alliance with the bourgeoisie must be continued in every way, and that the Kuomintang was the ideal carrier of the national-democratic revolution in China. The time when the revolution would enter its higher phase was still far off. This moderate attitude of the Stalin group, as against Trotsky and his partisans, was another instance of transferring Russian domestic politics to the international scene. And so the Moscow communists, far from counselling their Chinese comrades to undertake independent action, on the contrary treated the latter as a very negligible quantity, and dealt directly with the Kuomintang as the main revolutionary force. In January 1926, the fourteenth party conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, sent the following message to the Kuomintang: "To our party has fallen the proud and historical role of leading the first victorious proletarian revolution in the world... We are convinced that the Kuomintang will succeed in playing the same role in the East, and thereby destroy the foundation of the rule of the imperialists in Asia... if the Kuomintang strengthens the alliance of the working class and the peasantry in the present struggle and allows itself to be guided by the interests of these fundamental forces of the revolution..."¹⁶

¹⁶ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

At the February-March Plenum of the E.C.C.I., the Stalin-Bukharin-Borodin viewpoint — favorable to prolonged cooperation with the bourgeoisie in the national-democratic phase of the Chinese revolution — was thoroughly endorsed. To what point the E.C.C.I. and the foreign delegates considered the Chinese revolution to be national and not social, to what point they looked at the Kuomintang, and not the Communist Party, as the main force of progress, became clear at the very beginning of the conference. After Zinoviev's introductory speech, the Chinese communist Su Fan appeared to greet the conference in the name of the C.P.C. The applause given by the international communist leaders to their Chinese comrade was nothing in comparison to the mass ecstasy which broke loose when the fraternal delegate of the Kuomintang, General Hu Han-min¹⁷ stepped on the speakers' platform. The official E.C.C.I. account of the scene runs as follows:

"The gathering presented an unforgettable sight when the generalissimo of the armies of Canton, Hu Han-ming, in soldiers uniform, mounted the platform. During long minutes, the applause prevented the speaker from speaking. The solidarity of the revolutionary proletariat of the West with the oppressed peoples of the East thus showed itself in a shining way."¹⁸ At the end of almost every sentence of Hu's speech, the assembly broke into roars of applause, which grew into what resembled an outburst of hysteria, when the general concluded by shouting: "The third International is the general staff of the Revolution. . . Long live the third International! Long live the communist parties of the whole world!"¹⁹

In the E.C.C.I. Plenum's resolution on the Chinese question, it was stated that the proletariat had begun to take over the leadership of the revolution, and that the upper layers of the bourgeoisie were passing into the enemy camp. But the text saw the Kuomintang as the purest expression of the Chinese revolution. "The Kuomintang... is a revolutionary bloc of workers, peasants, intellectuals and urban democracy on the basis of the common and *durable*²⁰ class interests of these social layers in their struggle against foreign imperialism, against the feudal and militarist regime, for the independence of the country and for a revolutionary and democratic central power."²¹ Furthermore, the Kuomintang and the Canton government (not the Communist Party of China) were "the vanguard of the Chinese people in its struggle for independence".²² The resolution assigns the Kuomintang and the C.P.C. the joint task of democratizing the army and the administration,

¹⁷ The self-same Hu who murdered Liao Chung-kai.

¹⁸ *Correspondance internationale*, special number, March 2, 1926, p. 227.

¹⁹ *Correspondance internationale*, special number, March 2, 1926, p. 230. One year later, Hu displayed remarkable diligence in shortening the lives of as many communists as possible.

²⁰ Our italics (Boersner).

²¹ *Correspondance internationale*, special number, May 25, 1925, p. 720.

²² *Ibid.*

and of carrying on a constant anti-imperialist agitation among the masses. In the meantime, the Communist International must call all proletarians of the world to the defense of the Chinese revolution.

The first part of the resolution seems to make an exaggerated identification of the Kuomintang with the communist cause. If the Trotskyists went too far in advocating a break with the bourgeoisie, the Stalinists seemed to go too far the other way. But paragraph Six of the resolution shows that such was not the intention of the Stalin group. The paragraph warns the Chinese Communist Party against the dangers of both left and right deviations. While fighting against the ultra-leftists who tried to skip the democratic-national phase of revolution, the party must also fight the right-wing tendency which would make the communists lose their class identity and subordinate themselves to the leadership of the bourgeoisie.²³ That passage re-establishes the balance and gives the resolution an orthodox Leninist character; more Leninist perhaps than the Trotskyist demand for an immediate passage into the soviet phase. But the first paragraphs, with their emphasis on "durable" anti-imperialist interests of the bourgeoisie, might easily be interpreted to justify precisely such a right-wing deviation as paragraph Six was warning against.

The resolution ends, very perspicaciously, by drawing attention to the immense revolutionary importance of the peasantry, and calling on the Communist Party of China to ease its admission requirements and grow into a broad mass party.²⁴

3. THE NORTHERN EXPEDITION.

At the beginning of 1926, a series of events taking place in Canton and Shanghai induced Borodin to abandon his initial hostility to the idea of a military expedition toward the North.

In January the Kuomintang had held its second national congress, which was definitely dominated by the left wing of the party and especially by its communist members. The dissident right-wing members of the party thereupon withdrew to Shanghai, where they held an opposition congress. Chiang Kai-shek had failed at the majority congress to be elected to the post of head of the party and the government. The left-winger Wang Ching-wei was elected instead. Disappointed, Chiang began to flirt with the right-wing dissidents.

At dawn of March 20, 1926, Chiang's men suddenly swooped down on the communist leaders in Canton and arrested them. Members of the right-wing dissidence of the Kuomintang came pouring into town and gathered for a special session of the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Kuomintang.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 721.

At this gathering, Chiang Kai-shek proposed to vote a resolution "for the readjustment of party affairs".²⁵ According to this resolution, the communists would be subjected to severe restrictions in their activities inside the Kuomintang. They would have to give the Kuomintang Executive an exact list of their members within the party. The number of communists who could be elected to the executive committees of the Kuomintang, on the local, provincial or national level, would be limited to one-third of the committee's numerical strength. Furthermore the communist Kuomintang members were to promise "not to entertain any doubt on or criticize Dr. Sun or his principles".²⁶ Last but not least, the Communist Party would refrain from issuing to its own members instructions that had not been approved by a joint C.P.C.-Kuomintang committee.

Borodin, who had been absent, hurried back to Canton and asked Chiang to cease his anti-communist activities. Chiang did not feel strong enough to risk a complete break with the communists, and agreed to abandon his extreme demands. In return for Borodin's promise to support the Northern Expedition, and to dismiss certain Russian advisors who had incurred the wrath of the bourgeoisie, Chiang promised to continue his co-operation with the communists, and to carry out a second coup d'état—this time against the right wing of the Kuomintang. He ordered his men to arrest the right wing leaders, and to send them packing back to where they had come from—Shanghai.²⁷

Early in June, the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party met. Shocked by Chiang Kai-shek's coup d'état, and sensing the danger of further organizational union with the nationalists, the Plenum decided that the communists should leave the Kuomintang. Instead of working within the Kuomintang, the Communist Party should simply try to conclude a loose tactical alliance with it from the outside. Since such a policy would have hastened the break with the nationalists, and might have pushed the communists into isolation, the E.C.C.I. intervened, and asked the Chinese communists to cancel their decision. The task of the communists must continue to be that of "directing the entire Kuomintang to the Left and... guaranteeing it a stable Left policy". The resolution had reflected a stand close to that of the Trotskyist opposition, and was disavowed by the E.C.C.I. partly for that reason.²⁸

A few weeks later, a force of 100,000 men, divided into ten army corps, began to march North from Canton. The great Northern expedition had started.

Only two of the ten corps were really Kuomintang troops, built up around the Whampoa officers, and placed under Chiang Kai-shek's direct command. The other eight corps were made up of the re-

²⁵ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 107.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 112, and L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 650-652.

²⁸ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

organized troops of various warlords who had joined the nationalist side for unclear reasons. Chiang was nominally commander-in-chief of the army, but he was placed under the supervision of General Gallen and his fifteen Russian advisors. As long as he was in the countryside, where the Left was in its most favorable environment, Chiang accepted the supervision of Gallen and his Russians.

Both the communists and Chiang thus had excellent reasons for undertaking the Northern Expedition. In Kwantung Province, the communists had been too weak to break with the bourgeoisie and to start the Soviet revolution. At the same time, Chiang had been too weak to risk a break with the communists and with the useful Russian technicians. Marching North, the communists gathered around themselves the huge peasant masses, which would enable them to carry the revolution into its Soviet phase as soon as the bourgeoisie would go over to the side of reaction. Moreover, Borodin wished to prevent a "Trotskyite" revolution (i.e., a revolution by the communist rank-and-file against the Kuomintang) in Canton. An extremist revolutionary outbreak against the Kuomintang might have two possible results, both of which were equally appalling to the Moscow leadership. If the extremist revolution should fail, this would mean the defeat of the Comintern in China, for years to come. If it should succeed, on the other hand, the prestige of Trotsky would be enhanced to such a point that Stalin might be forced to resign from the chairmanship of world communism. The Northern expedition, which implies "extending" the revolution instead of "deepening" it, and which subjected the communists to Chiang Kai-shek's military command, forestalled the danger of an uncontrolled and uncontrollable uprising of the extreme left wing.²⁹ As for Chiang Kai-shek, he tried to reach Shanghai as swiftly as possible. In Shanghai he would find the financial and technical means to "stem the red tide". So the communists and the nationalists were rushing North side by side, in uneasy alliance, each trying to beat the other to the point at which he would be able to get rid of his partner. The Reds sought the masses of peasants which would be a basis for a Soviet revolution; Chiang sought the financial means which would enable him to set up his own regime.³⁰

In the meantime the great strike in Canton and Hongkong came to its end. The Kuomintang did not wish to fight on two fronts. The Northern Expedition was difficult enough, without handling a huge strike and boycott movement at the same time. Of course the secret sympathies of the right wing nationalists for the foreign business interests, with whom they would sooner or later reach a *modus vivendi*, also played a role in the ending of the strike. Furthermore the daily sight of revolutionary workers administering their own affairs must have been a thorn in the eye of the Chinese bourgeois. Negotiations were

²⁹ Cf. L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 648.

³⁰ Cf. L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 648, 653-657.

undertaken with the British authorities in Hongkong. In Canton, martial law was imposed and strikes were forbidden, in the name of national solidarity in support of the Northern Expedition. In view of their continued alliance with the bourgeoisie, and in line with their contention that the time for the social deepening of the revolution had not yet come, the communists agreed to the anti-strike rule and told the Canton workers to follow it. Nevertheless, riots broke out to protest against the measure. During six days, sporadic street-fighting took place, and at least fifty workers were killed.³¹ In August, the Canton government imposed compulsory arbitration in labor disputes. In the name of national revolutionary unity, the communists influenced the workers to swallow this bitter pill.

The Northern Expedition was a march of triumph. Wherever the National Army went, the peasantry arose to join the movement. The communists were finding the great mass reserves they had looked for. The peasant movement had a definitely social character. Peasant unions were formed in the villages; landlords were expropriated by force and put on trial as oppressors. Spontaneously the peasant movement became a soviet movement. Out of the sheer unfolding of events, without ideological pressure from any side, the Chinese peasants were carrying the revolution "into its higher phase".

This unexpected development, far from gladdening the hearts of the communist leaders, made them anxious. The resentment of the nationalist bourgeoisie against the peasants was obvious, and the Reds feared a premature break between themselves and the Kuomintang. They did not want this break to occur until later; at any rate not until the territorial expansion of the revolutionary movement had been completed. In October 1926, Stalin and Bukharin sent a telegram to the Chinese Communist Party, asking it to keep the peasant movement in check. Later, after the break with Chiang Kai-shek, Stalin admitted that this telegram had been a mistake, but said that he cancelled it very soon after sending it off. Actually it seems that the telegram was never officially cancelled, but that its content was simply invalidated by the decisions of the seventh E.C.C.I. plenum which met one month later.³² The plenum stated that the agrarian question must be solved immediately.

The situation was very difficult indeed for the Comintern leadership. If it made use of the aggressive mood of the peasants and led them into a violent agrarian revolution, it would promptly turn the armed might of the Kuomintang against itself. And furthermore, such a move would mean, on the Russian domestic scene, that Trotsky was right. If Stalin and Bukharin, on the other hand, put a brake on the peasant movement, they might miss a unique opportunity to establish Soviet rule in China, and they would certainly give Trotsky magnificent arguments with

³¹ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

³² Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

which to attack and overthrow them. The E.C.C.I. consequently searched for a middle-of-the-road solution, trying to satisfy both Chiang Kai-shek and the revolutionary peasants.

At the beginning of September, the Northern cities of Hankow, Hanyang and Wonchang were taken by the national army, and the province of Hupeh was being liberated swiftly. The Comintern decided that the time had come to put into practice the democratic principles of Sun Yat-sen. For the moment, two things should be done: 1) Convocation of an All-Chinese National Assembly; 2) An international conference to annul all unequal treaties.³³ At the same time, since Moscow still thought European imperialist intervention to be likely, the E.C.C.I. sent out a great appeal "to the young workers and peasants, to the soldiers and sailors of the imperialist armies and fleets" to fight for the slogan "Hands Off China!"³⁴ The Profintern added an appeal of its own to all workers of the world to stop imperialist intervention in China.³⁵

The city of Hankow, in Wuhan province, became the capital of the Kuomintang government. The great influx of peasants into the revolutionary ranks had immensely strengthened the communists and the left wing of the Kuomintang. The communists analyzed the Kuomintang as being divided into three fractions: a right fraction, representing the "compradores" (Chinese commercial agents of foreign firms) and headed by Sun Ho; a center fraction representing the "national bourgeoisie" (native industrialists struggling against foreign competition) and headed by Chiang Kai-shek; and the left fraction, representing the petty bourgeoisie (small tradesmen, professional men, intellectuals), headed by Wang Chin-wei.³⁶ The left fraction was on good terms with the communists. And in Hankow the influence of the left fraction and of the communists was preponderant.

4. THE SEARCH FOR A MIDDLE ROAD.

In the meantime the fifteenth conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union met in Moscow. Bukharin presented the overall report on the international situation and indicated that everything was at the moment centering around the vital question of China. In his analysis of the situation in China, Bukharin clearly advocated an immediate drastic agrarian reform.³⁷ But he admitted that this might make for very delicate situations. "The situation is extraordinarily complicated

³³ Tang Shin-she, "L'avance des troupes révolutionnaires et les tâches prochaines du Kouomintang", *Correspondance Internationale*, September 25, 1926, pp. 1153-1154.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1156.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Junior, "Les groupements au sein du K.M.T. et les efforts du P.C. de Chine", *Correspondance Internationale*, October 6, 1926, pp. 1186-1187.

³⁷ *Correspondance Internationale*, November 3, 1926, p. 1316. This was indeed equivalent to a cancellation of the E.C.C.I.'s October telegram.

and it can be expressed in the following way: While maintaining the united national revolutionary front against foreign imperialism, it is necessary to carry out the land reform at once, and to place the Chinese revolution on a broad peasant base.”³⁸

On November 22, the Seventh Plenum of the E.C.C.I. met. In regard to the Chinese question, the conference had basically three matters to deal with: 1) The problem of agrarian reform; 2) The problem of the relationship with the national bourgeoisie; 3) The problem of Shanghai. While the Chinese communists intended to spread and “deepen” the revolution as much as possible in the peasant area around Wuhan, Chiang Kai-shek was eager to proceed to Shanghai, where he could find a large and strong bourgeoisie to back him against the Left. Of course Shanghai was also filled with left-wing elements; it was not only the strongest bourgeois but also the strongest proletarian center of China. The communists analyzed the population of Shanghai as being divided into two basic blocs — one bloc, composed of imperialist foreigners, militarists, “compradores”, and the majority of university and college professors, and another bloc, composed of workers, students, small tradesmen, and native industrialists.³⁹ Even though the communists and the Left Kuomintang could count on the latter bloc, the former would lend powerful support to Chiang Kai-shek against the Left. If the task of the communists lay in stimulating the agrarian revolution and in mobilizing the working class and middle class of Shanghai against Chiang’s counter-revolutionary tendencies, could they nevertheless keep up the alliance with the bourgeois wing of the Kuomintang? Was the revolution still in its purely national phase or was it already entering the phase of class struggle inside the nation? The Chinese communists themselves felt that a huge part of the bourgeoisie was passing into the counter-revolutionary camp and that the class struggle was on the agenda. Tan Ping-shan, of the central committee of the Chinese Communist Party, wrote an article while the Enlarged E.C.C.I. was in session, stating that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat were now in conflict, each trying to seize the leadership of the national revolution.⁴⁰ Tan admitted that up to that point the bourgeoisie had been revolutionary. “The purely bourgeois movement, linked to American imperialism and directed against British and Japanese imperialism, became transformed into a national revolutionary movement allied to the proletariat...”⁴¹ But this bourgeois movement had split, and a part of it had become purely reformist. Tan Ping-shan therefore decided that the Chinese proletarians should henceforth base their action on an alliance with the petty bourgeoisie and the peasantry

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1317.

³⁹ Tang Shin-she, “Le Shanghai révolutionnaire”, *Correspondance Internationale*, November 3, 1926, p. 1330.

⁴⁰ Tan Ping-shan, “Les perspectives de la révolution chinoise et nos tâches prochaines”, *Correspondance Internationale*, December 1, 1926, p. 1577-1578.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

only, but not with the majority of the great national bourgeoisie. Furthermore the workers and peasants should already fight for the betterment of their social position, attacking the bourgeoisie whenever the latter took a reactionary stand. Tan concluded by advocating a continuation of the alliance with the Kuomintang, including even certain advanced sections of the great bourgeoisie, under the condition *that the proletariat be the leader of the national revolution.*⁴²

The E.C.C.I. plenum made this line its own. The resolution which was adopted involved contradictions, based on the attempt to initiate the social (agrarian) revolution *without* breaking the alliance with the Kuomintang centrists. The same significant scene took place as at the sixth plenum. While Tan Ping-shan received only moderate applause, the gathering broke into a roaring frenzy when the Kuomintang delegate Shao Li-tse appeared on the podium. His speech was greeted by unending volleys of applause and by the singing of the *Internationale* — an honor which in the old days had been reserved for men of the stature of Lenin or Trotsky.⁴³ These emotional demonstrations showed that even though the Comintern realized that the revolution might be entering a “higher phase”, it basically trusted the Kuomintang — including its military and centrist elements —, and believed in the Chinese bourgeoisie’s continued revolutionary integrity. Any other attitude would have implied the possibility that Trotsky might be right.

The plenum’s Chinese commission, presided by Gallaher and Tan Ping-shan, with Roy and Petrov as secretaries, based its work on Bukharin’s report on China. Bukharin gave lip-service to the left, anti-bourgeois viewpoint, by saying that “our struggle serves the victory of the revolution in China, *and the development of China by skipping the capitalist phase.*”⁴⁴ And he elaborated: “If the Leninist presentation of the question is correct, in saying that the colonial and semi-colonial countries, which in their great majority are peasant countries, can ‘skip’ the capitalist line of development, ... then this presentation must be valid for China above all. For if it were not valid for China, for which country could it be valid?”⁴⁵

At first this argument sounds similar to the views of the left opposition. Trotsky, in his theory of “permanent revolution” was advocating precisely such a “skipping” of the capitalist phase. According to Trotsky, the extension of capitalism had formed one single indivisible bourgeois-imperialist bloc all over the world, in which the Eastern bourgeoisie was included as well as that of the West. Indeed, Trotsky maintained that the Eastern bourgeoisie was even more extremely counter-revolutionary and dangerous than the Western.⁴⁶

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Protokoll der Erweiterten Exekution der Komintern*, 22. Nov. bis 13. Dez. 1926, p. 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁴⁶ Trotsky, *L'Internationale Communiste après Lénine*, p. 266.

The revolution, being world-wide and not national, cannot be limited to a purely national phase; but must inevitably pass directly from the national to the socialist phase. Therefore any alliance with the national bourgeoisie is wrong; the proletariat must carry out the national revolution with the sole aid of the peasantry and of sections of the petty bourgeoisie, and pass on to fulfill its socialist tasks while at the same time completing its national tasks. Somewhat ironically, this theory is very similar to the one which Bukharin himself defended against Lenin before 1917.

But in 1926, Bukharin's mention of the possibility to "skip" the capitalist stage was merely an attempt to show that the E.C.C.I. had not forgotten its "A.B.C. of Communism". In practice, the interests of the Russian ruling group demanded a well-controlled policy of continued alliance "from above" with the Kuomintang.

Manuilsky, who was Stalin's most faithful mouthpiece at that time, furthermore dispelled the purely verbal effect of Bukharin's declarations by speaking about the future of China in purely national terms. He saw the possibility of the rise of a mighty independent Chinese nation, constituting a center of attraction to all oppressed nationalities of Asia, and clashing with American imperialism in a struggle for hegemony over the Pacific.⁴⁷ Such a China would presumably not be a socialist country which had "skipped the capitalist phase" but a national-revolutionary and capitalist country of the Kemalist variety.⁴⁸

Sen Katayama brought the discussion on China down to earth by reminding the conference that the Chinese revolution was national, that the Communist Party could not afford to work alone, and that therefore "the attempt to isolate the Communist Party of China from the Kuomintang is childish".⁴⁹ The old Japanese revolutionary furthermore underlined the importance of the events in China in regard to other Eastern countries, and explained that the Javanese insurrection was partly due to the Chinese example.⁵⁰

Tan Ping-shan had reported in detail about the situation in his country, and warned that the Chinese communists were still weak. Therefore the danger existed that the bourgeoisie might seize the leadership of the national movement. To counteract this danger, the communists must place all their emphasis on the agrarian revolution, and achieve the "development of the peasant movement in China, while preserving the united front of all classes within the national movement against imperialism". In order to control and lead the Chinese revo-

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁴⁸ Manuilsky speaks of this future China's need to export its surplus population to the Pacific Islands. That means that he envisaged it as having a capitalist economy. Socialism theoretically solves population problems within the frontiers of the country in question, and eliminates the need for emigration as a cure for demographic pressure.

⁴⁹ *Protokoll der Erweiterten Exekutive...*, p. 167.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 338-339.

lution, the proletariat must not leave the Kuomintang, but remain within it and draw it to the Left. "The Kuomintang is a united organization of the revolutionary forces of all classes... If someone says that the communists should leave the KMT, or if certain comrades propose to organize a third party instead of the KMT, that represents an attempt to destroy the united front. Through our initiative, we must strengthen and develop the left wing of the KMT, and at the same time we must not forget to prevent the further switch to the right of the right wing of the KMT."⁵¹

The majority's position on China was thus clear: the communists must recognize: 1) That a growing rivalry existed between bourgeoisie and proletariat, for the leadership of the national movement, and that the C.P. must therefore broaden its social basis by advancing the agrarian revolution; 2) That at the same time the alliance not only with the petty bourgeoisie (left KMT) but even a large section of the national bourgeoisie (center and right KMT) must be preserved.

A difficult line, full of contradictions, yet inevitably dictated by the exigencies of the moment. The Chinese communists were too weak to "go it alone". They were too revolutionary to forget their social tasks. So the two aspects of their action must be combined. How?

Tan Ping-shan was convinced that Chiang-Kai-shek's center group in the KMT was intrinsically opposed to the right wing and to the imperialists, that it would refuse to pass over to the counter-revolutionary side, and that it was therefore ultimately dependent on communist support, and could not afford to turn against the Reds. And the left, "petty bourgeois" wing of the KMT, headed by Wang Ching-wei, would definitely remain friendly toward the communists, too.⁵² So the tactics of the C.P. must consist in: "1) fortifying the left wing; 2) Fighting the right wing; 3) Isolating the center wing and driving it to the left."⁵³ In order to carry this out, the C.P. must intensify the ideological agitation among the masses and loosen the firm organization of the KMT in order to give the communists a greater freedom of action within that party. *An ever more closely-knit communist group working inside an ever more loosely-knit nationalist mass party.* The decentralization of the latter would permit the increasingly centralized nucleus of the former to impose its hegemony on the whole movement. Tan advocated the agitation for a national democratic government.⁵⁴ The national democratic government should be either elected by a constituent assembly or appointed by the Kuomintang. In either case the communists must seek to have as many of their own men as possible in key posts.⁵⁵ At the same time, the workers and peasants

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 341-343.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 366.

⁵³ Here the Left Opposition missed a priceless chance to remark that no three-winged bird has ever been known to fly.

⁵⁴ The Left Opposition advocated a Soviet Government.

⁵⁵ *Protokoll der Erweiterten Exekutive...*, pp. 371-372.

must "create the basis for political power of the left wing within the KMT, by participating in local government".⁵⁶ The mass struggle must go on through all local organs of administration, such as "village assemblies, district assemblies, and finally the Constituent Assembly". Militarily as well as politically, the C.P. must carry on a dual policy. "We should give moral and material support to all progressive military leaders in China. But at the same time we should train our own military and technical cadres for the preparation of the armed uprising."⁵⁷ The peasantry and the small and middle bourgeoisie should be organized and should be "drawn into the Kuomintang as a group".⁵⁸

The agrarian reform which Tan advocated for the moment was not very revolutionary. "The peasants must keep at least fifty percent of their produce." This should be advocated officially, through the KMT. But here too, the action should be dual. While the communists as members of the KMT supported these moderate proposals, the C.P. as a separate organization should simultaneously carry on propaganda for the *immediate* seizure of the soil by the revolutionary peasants.⁵⁹

Thus, Tan concluded, "the class struggle is unavoidable even in the framework of the national revolution". On the other hand, "the development of the young private capitalism of the colonial and semi-colonial countries" will become unnecessary, and can be skipped only "in the period, when capitalism has collapsed in the imperialist states".⁶⁰

This exposé by Tan Ping-shan reflects a very keen grasp of the dualism implicit in Leninist tactics. The tactics of the united front on the surface are combined with the tactics of the class struggle underneath. This program represented a real compromise between the ultra-leftism of the diehard "Westernizers" and the moderation of those who, like Borodin, seemed to place all their hopes in the Kuomintang. It might have been effective if it had been applied.

M. N. Roy, lucid as usual, added some remarks to the theses of Tan Ping-shan, which he generally approved. Roy warned against the tactics of the foreign powers — especially the Americans — who would try to lure the Chinese bourgeoisie to the counter-revolutionary side. "America wants to kill China, not with bombs and machine guns, but with friendliness."⁶¹ Roy concluded therefore, that, even though the united front tactics must be continued, "we cannot count on the upper bourgeoisie when we speak of a united anti-imperialist front".⁶² The communists must tread very carefully in their relations with the Kuomintang, and be ever ready to defend themselves against treacherous attacks. Furthermore, Roy demanded that the agrarian revolution

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 373 — By 'armed uprising', Tan means the Soviet phase of the revolution after the national phase will have been completed.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 373. The Trotskyist counter-proposal was to recruit the peasants — not for the KMT but for the C.P.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 374-375.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

be proposed in very simple and radical terms: Nationalization of the land; confiscation without compensation of the landed estates. And he disagreed with Tan in a vital point: the peasants must not be lead by the Kuomintang but by the Communist Party! Since the Chinese revolution was taking place in the age of overall decline of capitalism, "the theory, according to which the Chinese revolution, being a democratic revolution, should develop under the hegemony, or even under the partial leadership of the bourgeoisie, is false. Since this is so, the peasantry, which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the nationalist forces, should be led by the working class".⁶³ Roy was obviously influenced by the Trotskyist opposition. His view is situated midway between that of the majority and the opposition. But it basically agrees with Tan Ping-shan's presentation. At least Tan's theses could be interpreted in the spirit of Roy's exposé. As a matter of fact, Tan Ping-shan arose to say that he fully agreed with the essential principle of proletarian leadership of the peasant masses.⁶⁴

After the conference had listened to the stirring, confused, and much applauded speech of the KMT delegate Shao Li-tse,⁶⁵ the discussion on China was brought to an end. The resolution drafted was a reflection of Tan Ping-shan's theses.

5. CHIANG KAI-SHEK'S COUNTER-REVOLUTION.

This program, efficient if properly carried out, was never applied.

Among other things, the E.C.C.I. itself agreed that, while the land reform or land revolution should be pushed ahead, satisfaction should be given to the KMT demand that the land belonging to nationalist officers or to their relatives be exempted from expropriation.⁶⁶ The Chinese comrades apparently omitted to inform the E.C.C.I. of the fact that such an exemption virtually meant the complete liquidation of the land reform program. For what landlord in China was not vaguely related to some officer who fought on the nationalist side? The Chinese family structure is vast and complex. And cousins in the twelfth degree are still relatives, after all.⁶⁷

In Hankow, Wuhan and the Hupeh province, controlled by the left Kuomintang and the communists, a revolutionary wave sprang up. Borodin and the left nationalist leaders convoked a meeting of the Kuomintang's central executive committee in Hankow, at which it was decided to deprive Chiang Kai-shek of all the special powers with which he had been invested a year earlier. Chiang was forced to resign from

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 407-411.

⁶⁵ Saying that Dr. Sun meant the same things as the Comintern, and that the KMT was for communism. *Ibid.*, p. 404.

⁶⁶ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

⁶⁷ Cf. A. Malraux, *La condition humaine*, p. 94.

the chairmanship of the central executive committee, and a form of collective leadership was established instead. Two communists were appointed to ministerial posts in the Hankow government.

At the same time, the peasants in the province around Wuhan were in a state of extreme restlessness. Peasant unions were formed in all the villages; landlords were summarily expropriated and put on trial for offenses against the people; a revolutionary peasant power was springing up, parallel to the official administrative organs of the Hankow government. The parallelism between these two forms of power was similar to that which had existed in Russia in 1917, when the Soviets were competing for control with the National Assembly.

Chiang Kai-shek, politically defeated in the leftist stronghold of Wuhan (Hankow) was more eager than ever to reach Shanghai, where friendly groups awaited him with open arms. In Shanghai, the workers and nationalist middle classes prepared to revolt. Communist and Kuomintang activists stocked arms and organized the people in militias. The working class militia, led and inspired by the communists, were in the majority, while the middle class militia, led by Kuomintang officers, was relatively weak.

The insurrection of the Shanghai workers against their ruling warlord, Li Pao-chang, first took the form of a general strike. Apparently Chiang Kai-shek slowed down his advance in order to give Li a chance to take bloody reprisals against the workers, and thus to strike a blow against Chiang's own future enemies.⁶⁸ In any case, blood flowed in the streets of Shanghai, a number of strike leaders were executed. After a few days, Chiang resumed his advance. The time for the armed uprising had come.

On March 21, 1927, at the sound of the noon whistles, the first shots were fired. While the streets became empty and the merchants hastily closed their shutters, squads of twenty to thirty workers spread out all over the city and attacked the police stations. The police in most cases opposed little resistance, and voluntarily handed their arms to the insurgents or even joined the ranks of the latter. The workers' militia, originally composed of 5,000 men, swiftly grew, as the insurrection spread and crowds of people joined in the fighting. Harold Isaacs calculates that as many as 500,000 to 800,000 persons were ultimately involved in the street battles. Serious resistance was only made by the White Russian troops, which were in the pay of the warlord Chang Tsung-chang. These troops were eventually driven back to the North Station, where they held out until the next day in an armored train. At six o'clock in the evening of March 22, as the first nationalist troops entered Shanghai, the white flag of surrender was flying over the North Station.⁶⁹ The first nationalist troops which entered Shanghai belonged to the First Division, composed entirely of

⁶⁸ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-154.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

revolutionary workers and commanded by the communist sympathizer Hsueh Yoh. Hsueh had deliberately broken Chiang's order to halt the advance, and had entered the city to come to the aid of the workers. Four days later, Chiang Kai-shek arrived and made his triumphant entry into Shanghai.

It was probable now that the time for a definite break between Chiang and the Left had come. Yet the Chinese Communist Party, Borodin, and the Russian advisors hesitated. Chiang Kai-shek was demanding that the workers' militia hand over its arms to him. Some of the communist leaders, wishing to preserve an alliance with the bourgeoisie at all events, were actually favorable to yielding to Chiang's demand. The Shanghai workers, and the rank and file of the party were violently hostile to such a measure. Borodin's headquarters in Hankow sought a compromise by ordering the workers to bury or hide their arms. When Chiang became more pressing, and after he had publicly stated that he would henceforth recognize the authority of the Hankow central committee, the E.C.C.I. itself ordered the Chinese Communist Party to avoid an open conflict with Chiang and to hide the arms.

To this day communists and revolutionary socialists of different parties and tendencies argue about the responsibility for the virtual disarming of the Shanghai workers, where Chiang's counter-revolutionary intentions were already well-known. It is probably that the Chinese Communist Party was at fault to a certain extent, in so far as it failed to inform Moscow of all aspects of the situation. But a heavier responsibility lies with Borodin and the E.C.C.I. Yet it is difficult to see what other choice they had than to seek desperately to postpone the break with Chiang. Borodin was convinced that an attack by the communists on Chiang Kai-shek would have raised the whole Kuomintang against the workers. The peasant basis was not yet sufficiently extended and deepened to enable the C.P. to carry on the revolution alone. To Borodin and the E.C.C.I. the choice may have seemed one between sacrificing the Shanghai workers or sacrificing the whole of the Chinese revolution. The Trotskyists claim that an armed uprising in Shanghai against Chiang Kai-shek would have saved the revolution and carried it into higher phase.

However that may be, Stalin at this particular point was reaching the height of his internal struggle against the Trotsky group. Any admission of the correctness of left-wing measures would seem like a concession to the opposition. This fact, combined with a possible lack of accurate information from Borodin's headquarters, drove Stalin to deliver his disastrous "squeezed lemon" speech on April 5. In this speech Stalin announced that Chiang, after some differences of opinion with the communists, had come to accept Kuomintang party discipline again, and was not, for the moment, a threat to the revolution. Stalin repeated that the Kuomintang was a harmonious grouping of revolutionary classes, "a sort of revolutionary parliament", and that the communists should refrain from breaking with a Right which might still

prove useful. "The peasant needs an old worn-out jade as long as she is necessary. He does not drive her away. So it is with us. When the Right is of no more use to us, we will drive it away. At present, we need the Right . . . Chiang Kai-shek has perhaps no sympathy for the revolution, but he is leading the army and cannot do otherwise than lead it against the imperialists. Besides this, the people of the Right have relations with the generals of Chang Tso-lin and understand how to demoralize them . . . Also, they have connections with the rich merchants, and can raise money from them. So they have to be utilized to the end, squeezed like a lemon, and then flung away."⁷⁰

Two days after this speech, "the squeezed-out lemon seized power and the army", as Trotsky observed.⁷¹ While the Shanghai communists were in a state of confusion and panic, Chiang Kai-shek's security troops came swooping down on them during the night. There was but little resistance, most of the communists' arms having been hidden, so that they were not immediately available when the police troops appeared.

Before striking against the communists, Chiang had taken the precaution of ordering Hsueh Yoh's First Division to leave Shanghai. Hsueh Yoh had been reticent, knowing perfectly well that his departure would mean the slaughter of the communist workers. He had made an offer to the communist leaders: he would remain in Shanghai, overthrow Chiang Kai-shek, and establish a left-wing government. But the communist leaders refused. They would not take the responsibility of being the first to break relations with the Kuomintang Center, even if it cost them their lives. In a bitter and depressed mood, Hsueh Yoh marched his division out of Shanghai.⁷²

After smashing the communist apparatus and arresting all party and trade union officials, Chiang Kai-shek's troops opened fire on the crowds which gathered to demonstrate against the arrest of their leaders. Thousands were killed. The arrested leaders were condemned to death. Most of them were shot or beheaded. Some were buried alive or burned to death in locomotive boilers.⁷³

6. THE PEASANT MOVEMENT AND THE MAO REPORT.

In the meantime, the situation in the countryside around Wuhan had become more revolutionary. Despite Chiang's coup d'état, the strength of the communists remained considerable. The peasantry, which had set up peasant associations throughout the areas liberated by the national army and controlled by the Wuhan government, was carrying on an ever-harsher struggle against the landlords, and spontaneously

⁷⁰ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

⁷¹ L.D. Trotsky, *Problems of the Chinese Revolution*, p. 91.

⁷² Two years later Hsueh Yoh, having gone over to the Right, became one of Chiang's most bloodthirsty Red-killers.

⁷³ Isaacs, *op. cit.*, p. 207; Malraux, *La Condition Humaine*, pp. 250-262.

carrying the revolution from its national into its social phase. The middle-class leaders of the left Kuomintang in Hankow worried about the revolutionary vigor of the peasants. They were willing to agree to a land reform, but insisted that such a reform must be carried out from above, and in its own good time, after the conclusion of the military operations. They complained violently about the peasants' excesses, and asked their communist allies to help them in keeping the rebellious elements in check. In accordance with its tactics of alliance with the petty bourgeoisie, and of postponement of the social revolution, the Chinese Communist Party agreed, and attempted to check the peasant excesses. This could be done in two ways: either by outside police intervention, or by persuasion. The left Kuomintang favored the former method while the communists preferred the latter. Nevertheless, in many instances the Reds actually agreed to police measures.

Not only the Trotskyists, but also certain Chinese communists who by and large were loyal to the Stalin line, criticized the Chinese Communist Party's concessions to the left Kuomintang. A specially harsh criticism was written by a young communist who made an inspection tour through the province of Human in February, 1927. This report shows a particularly keen and individual insight into the social character of the peasantry. And it shows boldness and an unorthodox spirit. The name of its author is Mao Tse-tung.

Mao starts by denying that the peasants' excesses against the landlords are to be deplored. Far from being deplorable, these excesses show a healthy revolutionary spirit on the part of the masses. If the communists join the petty bourgeoisie in opposing such actions, they are guilty of showing an objectively counter-revolutionary spirit. Excesses are useful, for "to correct wrongs, one must go to the other extreme, without which they cannot be righted."⁷⁴

Mao Tse-tung furthermore insists on the colossal importance of the movement of poor peasants in the Chinese revolution. For him, the poorest strata of the peasantry *take the place of the proletariat* in being the leaders of the masses. As long as the peasants are led by the Communist Party, i.e., inspired by the spirit of the proletariat, they thus become identical with the latter, in a country like China. Mao quite frankly states his low opinion of the other classes of the Chinese revolution: "To give credits where they are due, if we allot ten points to the accomplishments of the democratic revolution, then the achievements of the urban dwellers and the military units rate only three points, while the remaining seven points should go to the peasants in their rural revolution."⁷⁵ As Brandt, Schwartz and Fairbank have pointed out, this calculation allots not more than 1½ credits out of ten to the urban proletariat, even though orthodox Marxism had always considered the latter to be the inevitable leader even in the democratic revolution.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Brandt, *Documentary History of Chinese Communism*, p. 82.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

Mao Tse-tung praises the peasant associations for their remarkable work in destroying feudalism and undermining the power of the "local bullies and bad gentry" and all their underlings and mercenaries.⁷⁷ He explains that the poorest peasants, and especially the landless ones and the former vagabonds and bandits (p'i-tzu) were the most revolutionary of all, and usually held the leading posts in the peasant organizations. Even though the former vagabonds and bandits occasionally misbehaved, all in all they played a very positive role and directed their energy into constructive channels. To improve the discipline of the peasant associations, the communists and left KMT should therefore use persuasion and propaganda, but never under any circumstances resort to police intervention and arrests.⁷⁸

According to Mao Tse-tung, the revolutionary peasants had consolidated the national-democratic revolution by giving it an immediate social, anti-feudal content. They had done so by carrying out "Fourteen Great Deeds". These Fourteen Great Deeds were the following:

- "1. Organizing the peasants into the peasant associations...
- "2. Dealing political blows against the landlords...⁷⁹
- "3. Dealing economic blows against the landlords...⁸⁰
- "4. Overthrowing the feudal rule of the local bullies and bad gentry...
- "5. Overthrowing the landlords' armed forces and building up the peasants' armed forces...⁸¹
- "6. Overthrowing the political power of his Excellency the County Magistrate and his Bailiffs...
- "7. Overthrowing the clan authority of the elders and ancestral temples, the theocratic authority of the city gods and local deities, and the masculine authority of the husbands...⁸²
- "8. Extending the political agitation...
- "9. The peasants' prohibitions: ...gambling ... opium smoking ... sedan chair ... feasts ... vagabondage ...⁸³
- "10. Eliminating banditry...

⁷⁷ Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, v. I, p. 23.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-33.

⁷⁹ Offensive landlords were paraded through the villages in tall paper-hats bearing the inscription "Local bully So-and-so", or "So-and-so of the bad gentry". Mao reports that landlords turned "green with fear" at the thought of being thus punished.

⁸⁰ Reduction of land-rent, etc.

⁸¹ The peasants formed *spear corps*, composed of millions of members. Mao chides the communists and Left KMT for being afraid of spears.

⁸² Mao cites as an example: "Forbidding superstition and smashing idols has become quite the vogue in Liling". But he insists that the struggle against religion and against male supremacy must be conducted slowly and tactfully in order not to lose the masses.

⁸³ Offenders against these prohibitions "besides paying a fine, had to let off firecrackers by way of apology".

- "11. Abolishing exorbitant levies. . .
- "12. Cultural movement. . .
- "13. The co-operative movement. . .
- "14. Building roads and embankments. . ." ⁸⁴

And Mao Tse-tung concludes with a stinging reproach against the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party:

"But where would the national revolution be without this little bit of Red? If one shouts every day about 'arousing the masses of people', but is scared to death when the people do rise, what is the difference between that and Lord Sheh's love of dragons?" ⁸⁵

Mao Tse-tung's viewpoint is thus placed half-way between that of Stalin and that of Trotsky. He was more eager than Stalin to give an immediate social content to the national revolution, but unlike Trotsky he wanted to preserve the organizational alliance with at least the leftist petty bourgeoisie as long as possible. He understood that the national revolution must be social at the same time, but he did not share Trotsky's idea, according to which the situation was already ripe for the soviet phase. In thus taking a middle-of-the-road stand, Mao agreed perfectly with M.N. Roy, who, after the Shanghai events, had been placed in full charge of the E.C.C.I.'s committee on China.

7. THE FIFTH CONGRESS OF THE C.P.C.

After the Shanghai coup, Chiang Kai-shek passed through a period of weakness and instability. The big business interests of Shanghai, after financing his anti-communist activities, were abandoning him, and at the same time the forces of the Northern warlord, Chang Tso-lin, were advancing Southward, toward Hankow. Knowing that Chang Tso-lin would try to crush Hankow first and Shanghai afterwards, Chiang Kai-shek regretted having broken relations with the Left. He suffered a nervous breakdown and contemplated suicide. ⁸⁶ Hankow had two enemies in front of it. Since Chiang Kai-shek was closer than Chang Tso-lin, should the Left take advantage of the former's weakness and attack and destroy him, before wheeling Northward to fight Chang Tso-lin? Trotsky advocated such a course of action. Stalin and Bukharin, on the other hand, argued that this would have the effect of alienating the left KMT, which wanted to fight feudalism but not the bourgeoisie. Chang Tso-lin should be fought first, and Chiang Kai-shek later. Roy shared Stalin's viewpoint. But while Stalin was reticent to accept the idea that the break with Chiang Kai-shek was definite and final, Roy felt certain that the Chinese national bourgeoisie

⁸⁴ Mao, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-59.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59. Lord Sheh is a legendary character who loved dragons, but only in paintings.

⁸⁶ L. Fischer, *op. cit.*, v. II, p. 667.

had passed into the camp of counter-revolution for good. Stalin continued to think that the alliance with the left Kuomintang excluded the application of soviet methods in the countryside, while Roy believed that the time had come to lead the peasants onward on the path of agrarian revolution. Stalin and Roy agreed on continuing the alliance with the left KMT and on postponing the battle against Chiang Kai-shek until the time when Chang Tao-lin and the feudalists would have been beaten. But Roy disagreed with Stalin, and was close to the Trotskyist view, in demanding a simultaneous development of peasant soviets.

In May 1927, two congresses took place simultaneously: the fifth congress of the Chinese Communist Party, and the eighth plenary conference of the E.C.C.I. In a spirit similar to that of Mao Tse-tung's report, the congress of the Chinese party insisted that peasant excesses must be fought by persuasion only — if at all, — and never by police methods. M. N. Roy had made his views clear to the participants, and they agreed with him.

Under Roy's guidance the congress adopted the following resolution:

1. *Re-orientation of the revolutionary movement.* To fight Chiang Kai-shek as effectively as possible, the Chinese Communist Party should intensify its social action and "make clear the meaning and lessons of class differentiation".⁸⁷

2. *Agrarian question.* The land is in the hands of landlords who, even though they practice commerce, remain feudalists rather than capitalists. Instead of investing their money productively, they use it according to the feudal pattern, for land speculation. Native militarism, which is the paid tool of foreign imperialism is "grafted on to the feudal structure of the village". Therefore the victory of the national-democratic revolution, i.e., the defeat of foreign imperialism, can only be assured through the "total destruction of feudal relations in the village".⁸⁸ To carry out this essentially bourgeois-democratic program, however, the peasantry cannot rely on the bourgeoisie. The reason is the following: "In the normal revolution of human society the bourgeoisie generally liberates the peasantry from the shackles of feudalism. In China, however, the bourgeoisie has been unable to develop enough strength to resist the feudal system. On the one hand, the bourgeoisie has developed from the feudal landlord class and still maintains close connections with that class. On the other hand, it has developed as a compradore class closely tied to imperialist exploitation... In view of these facts, the peasantry must seek its allies, in its struggle against feudalism and its supporters, among the petty bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It must be led by the proletariat and supported by the petty bourgeoisie."⁸⁹ The division of land on a basis of equality could

⁸⁷ Brandt, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁸⁸ Brandt, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

only be carried out under a policy of land nationalization. The Communist Party must demand this nationalization.

To be effective, the revolutionary peasant movement must be based mainly on the poor peasants and organized by them. It is of crucial importance that the peasants be armed. "As a result of this trend [of arming the peasants], many landlords have already taken action to carry out a practical solution of the agrarian problem."

On the basis of these considerations, the congress advocated the following measures in regard to the land:

- a) Confiscation and distribution of village communal land, and of land held by schools, temples, missions or groups.
- b) The land of small landlords should be exempted from confiscation.
- c) "The confiscated land should be subject only to one graduated land tax to be paid to the state. (No additional taxes of any kind should be imposed.)"
- d) Abolition of all political privileges of the landlords. All power to the village councils.
- e) Establishment of a people's army.
- f) Suppression of usury.⁹⁰

8. THE EIGHTH E.C.C.I. PLENUM: READJUSTMENT OF THE STALIN LINE.

About the same time the Chinese question was intensively discussed at the eighth plenum of the E.C.C.I. Bukharin, who directed the proceedings, tried to steer a middle course, as Roy was doing, between the extreme right and extreme left position. The extreme right position, held by Stalin and Bukharin originally, had shown itself to be erroneous: the alliance with Chiang Kai-shek had failed. On the other hand, in rejecting the extreme right position and in dissociating themselves from it, the Comintern leaders had to avoid the danger of giving in to the left opposition. Because Stalin felt compelled to prove that Trotsky was completely in the wrong, he sought to present his own position as immutable. Instead of admitting that he was taking a slight step to the left, he pretended that the Comintern position had been unswervingly correct all the time, and that the elements guilty of placing an exaggerated trust in Chiang Kai-shek were not the Comintern leaders but the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party.

Bukharin, in order to prove that the Left Opposition had not seen the events clearly, spoke of Zinoviev's stand in 1926, when the latter had definitely approved the idea of continued co-operation with Chiang Kai-shek and the national bourgeoisie. Actually, Zinoviev and Trotsky, within the left opposition, had always disagreed on the Chinese question, while being of the same opinion on the main objective of

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96-97.

their fraction: namely, the struggle for the: establishment of greater democracy within the Party. But Bukharin, by showing the divergence of opinions between Zinoviev and Trotsky, succeeded in presenting his own and Stalin's viewpoint as being actually more consistent than that of the opposition. "I conclude", he said, "that the opposition from the beginning on made the 'mistake' either to keep silent or to agree with us. That is the historic truth regarding this matter."⁹¹

Bukharin then stated that Chiang's coup was far from deadly to the further development of the Chinese revolution. To support the view that the peasantry in particular continued to be in a highly inflammable state of mind, he mentioned Mao Tse-tung's report on the situation in Hunan.⁹²

Let us now carry out an honest self-criticism, Bukharin continued, and let us see whether our former policy of alliance with the national bourgeoisie was basically correct. Another question to be answered is the following: Has the Comintern done everything in its power to warn the Chinese Communist Party against Chiang?

To prove that the policy of alliance with the national bourgeoisie was correct, Bukharin quoted Lenin's theses of the second Comintern congress. Such an alliance was correct according to Lenin, as long as the Communist Party preserved its autonomy as a separate group. Furthermore the Chinese bourgeoisie had been much more revolutionary-minded than the Russian bourgeoisie before the October Revolution. As to the Northern Expedition, it had not been a mistake, as Trotsky contended, because while it was true that it had augmented the strength of the bourgeoisie, it was also true that it had immeasurably strengthened the revolutionary peasant movement.⁹³

Bukharin maintained that the Comintern had frequently sent warning letters to the Chinese party, telling it to beware of Chiang Kai-shek.⁹⁴ Unfortunately he did not specify the number, the dates, or the exact content of these letters.

Henceforth, he continued, the tactics of the Chinese communists must consist in keeping up an intimate alliance with the left Kuomintang and in working within the framework of the Hankow (Wuhan) government. Trotsky and Zinoviev were advocating the establishment of a separate Soviet government, which would fight not only Chiang and the reactionaries, but Wuhan as well. This was wrong, Bukharin insisted. The left Kuomintang represented substantial revolutionary forces of peasants and petty bourgeois. It was true, he admitted, that many of the Wuhan leaders were not petty bourgeois but upper bour-

⁹¹ *Das VIII. Plenum der Executive der K.I., Mai 1927. Die Chinesische Frage*, p. 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

geois, and that they would sooner or later pass over into the camp of counter-revolution. "But is that a sufficient reason for renouncing the use of a great mass organization?"⁹⁵ Trotsky was "skipping phases" and mistaking the democratic for the socialist revolution, Bukharin charged. The correct answer was not the formation of a separate Soviet government, but working within the left Kuomintang and bringing into it as many revolutionary peasant elements as possible. The left Kuomintang would thus gradually be transformed into a Soviet movement. The most important task for the movement lay in "issuing the slogan of collective adherence of all mass organizations, of workers, peasants, craftsmen, petty bourgeoisie and army units — to the left Kuomintang".⁹⁶

Trotsky rose to defend his point of view against Bukharin. In the midst of a storm of heckles, whistles, insults and threats, he spoke simply and manfully, towering over the noisy Stalinist claque.

He began by protesting against the "atmosphere of terror" to which he and the left opposition were being subjected, against the fact that Zinoviev was not being allowed to be present at the conference in order to defend himself against Bukharin's attacks, and against the fact that the opposition was not permitted to submit its viewpoints to the judgment of public opinion through the newspapers. The Stalinist majority's policy had become the following: "Every mistake of the leadership is at once 'rectified' through measures against the opposition."⁹⁷

Bukharin's viewpoint, Trotsky charged, was Menshevist. Like the Mensheviks in Russia before 1917, he was advocating that the democratic revolution be led by the bourgeoisie instead of being led by the proletariat. "The miserable theory of the bloc of four classes" should have been denounced as being a Menshevik theory of treason.

To prove that the Stalinist leadership had failed to understand the danger of a bourgeois coup d'état, Trotsky quoted from Stalin's "queezed lemon" speech, and expressed ironic surprise at the fact that the stenographic record of that memorable oratorical performance had disappeared.

Trotsky proposed the following measures. 1) Autonomy of the Chinese Communist Party and a critical attitude toward the left Kuomintang; 2) Immediate launching of the agrarian revolution; 3) Immediate formation of soviets; 4) "The alliance between the Communist Party and the truly revolutionayr Kuomintang must not only be preserved, but even broadened and intensified, on the basis of the mass soviets"; 5) Arming of the workers on the basis of the soviet organization; 6) Energetic struggle against rightist deviations.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

But Trotsky was unable to finish his speech. In the midst of a tornado of yells and insults, he was forced to leave the floor.⁹⁹

Stalin himself took the floor to reply to Trotsky. With a very fine pretense at modesty and generosity, he announced that he would refrain from replying to the "personal attacks" which had been unleashed against him by evil tongues. Then he began his polemic against the opposition's viewpoint.

The Comintern, he boldly stated, had not supported the bourgeois revolution but had *used* it. Now the Chinese revolution had passed from its general national phase into its agrarian phase, and the national bourgeoisie had passed into the enemy camp. What Trotsky failed to understand was, that for the time being "the main factor of oppression in China . . . is the remnants of feudalism".¹⁰⁰ Trotsky thought that the customs policy of the imperialist powers constituted the most important factor of oppression. This, according to Stalin, meant placing the emphasis on the wrong factor. The internal factor of feudalism was the strongest.

From that distinction, Stalin went on to explain that Trotsky had always been guilty of under-estimating the agrarian and peasant factor in revolutions, and in seeing all situations in a completely Western light, as a simple opposition between capital and labor. Instead of recognizing the immense importance of the peasantry in the under-developed countries he simply analyzed the situation in terms of proletariat and bourgeoisie.

Then he opposed the idea of establishing soviets, by some very strange sophistry. He mentioned the fact that Lenin had said that soviets could be established in underdeveloped countries only if an advanced workers' state was able to give active assistance to those Soviets. "It is obvious", Stalin declared, "that these theses do not refer to China or India, where a small industrial proletariat exists and where the establishment of *workers'* soviets can under certain circumstances be the condition for the establishment of peasants' soviets, but they refer to other, more backward countries, such as Persia."¹⁰¹

In other words, Stalin sought to justify his policy by maintaining

⁹⁹ The whole atmosphere in which this took place was frankly disgusting — quite apart from considerations of intellectual "right" or "wrong". Bukharin having shouted at Trotsky that the latter was "shameless", Trotsky replied mildly that Bukharin seemed to be easily "moved by shame". The German Remmele, wilfully, "misunderstanding" this, interrupted Trotsky by demanding that the Plenum force the latter to keep quiet, and by screaming: "To call Comrade Bukharin shameless, is the vilest thing I ever heard". Trotsky replied: "I have been accused of being shameless, . . . and so *you* protest — against *me*! I am speaking, not of shamelessness but of a Remmele who is easily *moved by shame* and who accuses me of shamelessness..." At this the chairman shouted at Trotsky: "I ask you to stop using such expressions. Don't think you can do whatever you like here!" *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

that China was at the same time too *advanced* for peasant soviets and too *backward* for workers' soviets!

There is no middle road between the establishment of soviets and support of the Hankow régime, Stalin insisted. One must choose between the two. Establishing soviets was tantamount to fighting against Hankow. Since the petty bourgeoisie in Hankow was still revolutionary, it could be very harmful to do so.¹⁰²

Thus Stalin and Trotsky agreed on one point: that an absolute choice had to be made between Hankow and the soviets. Stalin chose Hankow and continued collaboration with parts of the bourgeoisie; Trotsky chose the immediate rupture of the alliance with the bourgeoisie, and the march onward into the soviet phase of revolution.

Between these two extremes, Roy believed that a middle-of-the-road formula could be found, combining social revolution in the countryside with continued support of the left Kuomintang. Zinoviev, who in other domains agreed with Trotsky, in this case had a conception similar to that of Roy.

Katayama, Pepper, Ferdi and others spoke in support of Stalin's basic idea as against that of Trotsky.¹⁰³ The Indian delegate Dassono gave a very intelligent reason for choosing Stalin's rather than Trotsky's strategy: the Chinese revolution, he said, had failed to stimulate strong revolutionary movements in the rest of Asia. In view of this, the Chinese Communist Party could only seek to *defend* what had already been gained, rather than to undertake a mad and self-destructive rush into a "higher phase". And a defensive position implied attempting to continue cooperation with the bourgeois Left.¹⁰⁴

The Chinese commission of the plenum, after discussing all aspects of the question, reported as follows: The Chinese revolution is entering a phase in which its "main force lies in the developments of the revolutionary agrarian movement", in the realization of an agrarian revolution which consisted in "the confiscation and nationalization of the soil".¹⁰⁵ The Communist Party of China therefore had the essential task of intensifying its agrarian agitation.

The resolution stated that henceforth the work of the Chinese communists would be very difficult, since it would have to be two-fold, "from above and from below". "From above", the Chinese Communist Party must try to keep up its alliance with the left Kuomintang as long as possible, while at the same time carrying on social revolutionary agitation among the peasants "from below".¹⁰⁶

The text of the resolution admitted "that new ruptures within the national-revolutionary front are not only possible, but inevitable, that

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 74-94.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 133-134. Roy reasoned the same way.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

we shall have to face further betrayals, and that we shall suffer further partial defeats. We wish to dispel the impression that we entertain a feeling of vulgar and superficial optimism regarding the perspectives of the Chinese revolution. But at the same time we do not believe that the pessimistic idea, which is represented here by the opposition, is acceptable either".¹⁰⁷ The defeat inflicted on the Comintern by Chiang should be considered to be a purely temporary passing setback.

The committee admitted that there could be no absolute guarantee against betrayal, but indicated that nevertheless there were excellent possible safeguards against such an event. The main safeguard would lie in the fullest possible development of the mass movement in the countryside. At the same time, active participation in the left Kuomintang and in the Hankow (Wuhan) government would constitute another safeguard.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, perhaps the most important immediate task of the Chinese Communist Party must be that of gaining a stronghold in the army. "As long as we do not succeed in obtaining a sufficient safeguard in the military domain, everything will remain... empty talk, because we will be cut off from all that today and forever constitutes the strength of the revolutionary movement."¹⁰⁹

The Kuomintang, according to the committee, was more than an ordinary political party. It was an organization which already contained the germ of a soviet society! "There is something in the Kuomintang which makes it a sort of 'representative' organization of the soviet type. By joining it collectively, we shall serve to emphasize these characteristics, and thereby it will become easier for us to exert a determining influence on its members."¹¹⁰

Inside the committee a sharp discussion had taken place regarding the question of soviets. Should the Chinese communists set up soviets parallel to the Kuomintang and the Wuhan government? The Frenchman Treint had proposed that solution, arguing that the national phase of the revolution was already passing into the completely social phase.¹¹¹ But the majority had decided that this was not so. The time for the call to purely social, soviet revolution had not come. Treint and all those who advocated immediate sovietization were underestimating the importance of the petty bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie must be kept in the revolutionary camp, and this could not be done if soviets were established, for the petty bourgeois would thereby be frightened into going over to the other side.¹¹²

Thus the plenum basically agreed with Stalin and Bukharin, in characterizing the Chinese revolution as bourgeois democratic, in advocating continued co-operation with the petty and left bourgeoisie,

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-47.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-48.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-49.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

in proposing the continuation of action *within* the Kuomintang, and in rejecting, for the time being, the idea of Soviets. On the other hand the plenum, with the consent of Stalin, took a slight step to the Left, in so far as it advocated the intensification of the agrarian agitation. In short the tactics worked out by the plenum was two-fold: work "from above" (in the KMT) and "from below" (in the agrarian revolution) at the same time; driving the revolution further toward the left, but without breaking out from the bourgeois-democratic framework into the socialist framework. This corresponded quite completely to the views of M. N. Roy, who had for a while held a center position — farther to the right than Trotsky but farther to the left than Stalin. It also corresponded to the views of Mao Tse-tung.

The tone of the whole debate made it obvious that the real, essential point of conflict was not the Chinese question, but the Stalin-Trotsky struggle. Against his rival, Stalin had chosen the right-wing stand, which was most suitable for the consolidation of his own position inside the U.S.S.R. — the principle of Order as against that of Revolution. Stalin's victory at the plenum was overwhelming. The majority — carefully chosen beforehand — supported the man who was able to offer the most, in terms of power and political advancement, rather than the one who had nothing to offer, but — as one of his greatest adversaries was to put it — "blood, sweat and tears". For different reasons, both the weary Russian people and the ambitious communist party *cadres* longed for peace and order. That is why Stalin won. China was basically a pretext. Nevertheless, the impact of reality was great enough to force Stalin to take a step in the direction of the opposition, and to agree to an intensification of agrarian agitation in China.

In accordance with these decisions of the E.C.C.I. plenum, Stalin, on June 1, 1927, sent a message to the Chinese Communist Party, instructing it to cease curbing the peasants. "Peasant excesses" should not in any case be repressed by military force but should be corrected through the educational activities of the peasant unions.¹¹³ The message also told the Chinese communists to set up a revolutionary militia, independent of the Wuhan government. In other words, Stalin accepted and repeated the same suggestions which Mao Tse-tung had made in his report on the peasant movement in Hunan.

But it was too late. Wang Ching-wei, the chairman of the left Kuomintang, decided that the communists were about to transgress the limits of the democratic middle-class revolution and that they had to be dealt with. It was Roy who brought on the crisis through his astoundingly naïve act of showing Stalin's directive to General Wang and requesting the latter's approval.¹¹⁴ Immediately Wang and the other generals struck. The communists were expelled from the left

¹¹³ Brandt., *Documentary History of Chinese Communism*, p. 92.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Kuomintang. Many were arrested, some were killed. In the countryside the gentry, supported by the troops of Hankow, "re-established order", by slaughtering and torturing thousands of peasants.

9. STALIN MOVES TO THE LEFT.

Now that the Comintern had lost its chance of playing a leading role in the bourgeois-democratic revolution in China, the question of responsibilities arose again. The Trotskyist opposition, in a last counter-attack, claimed that the Wuhan disaster was the inevitable result of the one basic mistake which the Stalinist majority had committed — to think that joint action with the bourgeoisie could lead to revolutionary results. The Stalinist majority vehemently defended its own policy and maintained that this second defeat had not been brought about by a wrong set of tactics, but by the incorrect application of these tactics. The fault lay not with the strategists of the Comintern, they said, but with the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, which had failed to carry out the International's instructions.

On August 1, at a joint meeting of the Central Executive Committee and the Central Control Commission of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Stalin defended his own position and attacked the Trotskyists and the leaders of the C.P. of China. He accused the opposition once more of not knowing the difference between an advanced industrial society and an underdeveloped country. In an advanced or imperialist country, revolution could not contain a national element, while in a backward country it inevitably must. China was not the same as the Russia of 1905.¹¹⁵ Russia, though backward, was imperialist, while China continued to be a semi-colony which was oppressed instead of oppressing others. The Chinese revolution, in spite of setbacks, was proceeding according to its natural pattern, Stalin maintained. It was entering its third phase. Its first phase had been that of the national united front against imperialism. Its second phase had started with the defection of the national bourgeoisie, and was that of the bourgeois-democratic revolution properly speaking. This second phase had not yet come to an end, in spite of the desertion of the Wuhan left bourgeoisie. Kemalist Turkey had stopped at the first phase. The Turkish national bourgeoisie continued to be revolutionary and there was as yet little social tension inside the national front. But China had gone farther.¹¹⁶

Stalin denied the Trotskyist allegation that the Comintern had instructed the Chinese communists to bow under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and to give up the agrarian struggle. He pointed to the

¹¹⁵ An analogy Trotsky used to prove that the proletariat must remain independent of the bourgeoisie even during the bourgeois-democratic phase.

¹¹⁶ Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question*, p. 236.

resolution of the seventh and eighth E.C.C.I. plenums, which stressed the independent class aspect of the revolution.

The first phase of the revolution had failed to fulfill its purpose of liberating China from the imperialists, said Stalin, and had bequeathed this task to the second phase. In the same way, the second phase, which had as its principal aim the agrarian, anti-feudal revolution, would probably fail to accomplish this aim completely, and would bequeath it to the third.¹¹⁷

Stalin, then, did not consider the "second phase" (alliance with the petty bourgeoisie and the left Kuomintang) to be over. In spite of the rupture with Wuhan, he believed that there was still a possibility of working with a section of the Kuomintang.

In order to prepare the Chinese Communist Party for its further tasks and to eliminate the old leadership which was considered responsible for both the Shanghai and the Wuhan defeats, Bukharin, in mid-July called for an emergency conference of the Chinese party and for the election of a new central committee. At the same time, since Borodin was leaving China in defeat and returning to Russia, the Comintern official Lominadze was sent to take his place as Comintern advisor. Lominadze had definite instructions on how to handle the "second phase".

The Chinese party's emergency conference met at Hankow¹¹⁸ on August 7, 1927. In accordance with Bukharin's instructions, the leaders of the party were subjected to extremely sharp criticism for their "opportunistic mistakes" — (for failing to prepare the party for resistance against the treacherous bourgeoisie, for failing to push the agrarian revolution ahead as energetically as possible, etc.). Chen Tu-hsiu, who had been secretary-general of the party since its foundation, was dismissed. He was replaced by Chu Chin-pai. Tan Ping-shan and others were also ousted from their posts.

The emergency conference then decided that the definite defection of the national bourgeoisie had pushed the revolution well onward into its second phase. But this second phase was precisely the bourgeois-democratic one. Therefore even now, no soviets should be set up! The Communist Party should take the leadership of the workers', peasants' and petty bourgeois masses into its hands, and lead them to victory in the agrarian, petty bourgeois-democratic revolution, but soviets should only be established in the highest, socialist phase. The present strategy, tending toward the democratic mass revolution against imperialism, feudalism and the national bourgeoisie, implied the use of the tactics of "united front from below". Since it was henceforth impossible for the communists to work legally within the Kuomintang and to come to agreements with its leaders, they must seek to gain

¹¹⁷ Stalin, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

¹¹⁸ The left Kuomintang, while expelling the communists from all posts, had not outlawed them *de jure*.

control of the petty bourgeois rank-and-file of the nationalist party from below, and to sweep it away from its own leadership into the path of social revolution. Militarily speaking, this implied armed insurrection against all generals, with an attempt to stimulate the enlisted men to mutiny against their officers.

In a circular letter to all party members, the central committee explained the meaning of its special session of August 7th. It stated that the leaders who had led the party into partial defeat through their opportunist right-wing deviationism had been removed, and that henceforth the party would fight uncompromisingly against all its enemies. The agrarian revolution was the main task. The circular letter told the comrades to impress the petty bourgeoisie with the fact that the agrarian revolution was no threat to it.¹¹⁹

The outgoing central committee was accused of having constantly disregarded the necessity for independence of the workers and peasants from the bourgeois leadership of the KMT. They had disarmed the workers and the peasants, and lost touch with the rank-and-file of the party. Violation of intra-party democracy and disregard of the wise instructions of the Communist International were the two main crimes of the opportunist leaders. "This was... a criminal act against the Chinese and international communist movement."¹²⁰

The conference then outlined what the party's new policy must be. While saying that the revolution was only in its bourgeois-democratic stage for the moment, the resolutions indicated that the passage from there into the socialist phase would come soon.¹²¹ For the time being, "the petty bourgeoisie can for the most part still participate in the revolutionary movement",¹²² but the time would come when it could no longer be used. The new emergency politbureau which had been elected must quickly create secret organs for the armed insurrection, while at the same time intensifying revolutionary agitation among the organized workers. It must also tighten the union between the party and the Communist Youth League.¹²³

The armed uprising must be well organized. "Unorganized, sporadic uprisings by the peasants are immediately crushed by the militarists. At the present time, therefore, the preparation by the Party of systematic, planned peasant insurrections, organized on as wide a scale as possible, is one of the main tasks of the Party."¹²⁴ Even before the emergency conference issued its call to battle, the ultra-revolutionary insurrection had already begun. A desperate mutiny had broken out among the communist troops of the left Kuomintang's "Iron Army", on August 1st,

¹¹⁹ Brandt..., *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹²⁰ Brandt..., *op. cit.*, p. 116.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹²³ The Communist Youth had been in left opposition against the central committee of the party.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

at Nanchang. The revolutionaries won the first battle. Then, however, instead of moving into a red peasant area where they could expect to rally the population around themselves, they stood firm and waited for all white armies of China to rush to the spot. The insurrectionaries suffered bloody defeat and dispersion near Swatow.

From then on, a long series of planned insurrections took place. All of them failed. Instead of accepting the inescapable fact that the revolutionary wave had passed in China and that a period of strategic retreat had become necessary, the Comintern leadership and its Chinese partisans threw soldiers, workers and peasants into their butchers' arms time after time, in a desperate attempt to prove that the revolution, instead of having undergone a serious defeat, was... entering its highest phase! The mistakes committed by the Stalinist leadership before the rupture with Wuhan were understandable and perhaps unavoidable. It is a very doubtful indeed whether the Trotskyist alternative would have been more effective. The author is inclined to believe that it would only have hastened the defeat, and that all in all the Stalin-Bukharin-Roy tactics were the only possible ones. But after the August conference of the CCP, Stalin's and Bukharin's tactics become murderous madness, and nothing could possibly excuse them. To preach general insurrection when there was no longer a mass basis for it, to shed the blood of thousands in hopeless combat, for the sole purpose of seeking to show that the Trotskyist opposition had been wrong—that is inexcusable, not only from the standpoint of political expediency but also from that of overall ethical considerations.

This policy of useless slaughter reached its climax in December 1927, when the Chinese Communist Party, with the help of foreign Comintern agents,¹²⁵ led the workers of Shanghai into insurrection. The battle was lost in advance. The Shanghai Commune had no backing outside the city; it was fighting one of the most powerful concentrations of counter-revolutionary force. After several days' bitter fighting, in which the revolutionaries displayed a heroism comparable to that of their brothers in the Paris of 1871, the white army regained control over the city. At least 2,000 workers were killed in the fighting. An unknown number, situated somewhere between 3,000 and 12,000, was executed after the battle.

Control of China now lay entirely in the hands of the Chiang Kai-shek group. The communists were reduced to the position of "bandits", i.e., bands of political outlaws. On the diplomatic level, a rupture of Russo-Chinese relations followed. On November 7th the Soviet Consulate in Shanghai was raided. The same thing took place in Canton, where the consular staff was arrested, and six Chinese employees were put to death by strangulation. On December 14, Nanking officially severed diplomatic relations with Moscow.

¹²⁵ The German Heinz Neumann was the principal one.

10. THE LI LI-SAN PERIOD.

The new state of affairs was examined by the sixth national congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which met in exile, in Moscow. The congress made a last desperate attempt to analyze the complete setback of the Chinese revolution in a hopeful light and to place the stamp of approval on the Comintern's suicidal "higher phase" insurrectionary tactics. The congress lasted from the end of July to the beginning of September 1928, so that it coincided with the sixth congress of the Communist International.

The congress placed the blame for the disastrous effects of the policy of armed "putsches" not on the shoulders of those who were really responsible — Stalin and Bukharin —, but on those of the local Chinese executors of the Comintern's commands. Deciding that the new tactics had been wrongly applied, the congress simultaneously condemned — once more — Chen Tu-hsiu for his "rightist, opportunist deviationism" during the previous phase, and the new leader Chu Chin-pai, for a "putschist, leftist deviation".¹²⁶ A new politbureau was elected, and Hsiang Chung-fa became secretary-general of the party. But the real party leader was Li Li-san.

The defeat of the Canton Commune had led the Comintern to admit that the revolutionary wave was receding in China, but it refused to agree with Trotsky and to recognize that this recession had a long-term character. The Chinese party congress therefore spoke of "waves", and concluded that China was at the moment in "the trough between two [revolutionary] waves".¹²⁷ The implication of this was, that a new "wave" was about to arise, and that all in all the ultra-insurrectionary policy should be continued.

The congress adopted various resolutions, in which it was said, among other things, that the final, extreme revolutionary battle was approaching, in China as in the rest of the world.¹²⁸ The Chinese revolution would, in the framework of this general upheaval, soon pass into its socialist phase.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, for the moment the Chinese revolution was still bourgeois-democratic, and had to fight imperialism and feudalism. The destruction of these forces could only be carried out by a "democratic dictatorship of the workers and peasants". In other words, the last longing for a "bloc of three classes", including the "petty bourgeois" rank-and-file of the left Kuomintang, had disappeared from the communists strategists' minds. "The workers and peasants are the [bourgeois-democratic] revolution's only source of

¹²⁶ Brandt..., *op. cit.*, pp. 124-125.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹²⁸ This was based on the Comintern's general line, laid down at the sixth world congress.

¹²⁹ Brandt..., *op. cit.*, p. 130.

power.”¹³⁰ The party, upon instructions from the Comintern, also admitted at last that soviets should now be established!¹³¹ Thus the revolution would be able to pass directly from its most radical bourgeois-democratic phase into the socialist phase, depending on “the strength of the struggle”.¹³²

The revolution had so far failed, the congress decided, for both objective and subjective reasons. The objective reasons were: the power of the imperialists, the treachery of the national bourgeoisie, the armed power of the landlords, the “uneven development of the workers and peasants”, and, “the vacillation of the petty bourgeoisie”.¹³³ The subjective causes for the defeat could be found in the “mistakes of opportunism” of the Chen Tu-hsiu leadership. Showing a “misunderstanding of the nature of the revolution” and interpreting the united front policy incorrectly, Chen Tu-hsiu and his colleagues had followed “a dependent, uncritical and conciliatory policy [which] hampered the class struggle and the agrarian revolution, and willingly surrendered the leadership of the revolution”. While the tactical line laid down by the August 1927 emergency conference contained serious “adventurist” and “putschist” errors, it was basically preferable to the opportunist policy followed earlier. The congress suddenly affirmed something which only a few months earlier would have been condemned as rankest Trotskyist heresy, namely, that the Nanchang, “Autumn Harvest” and Canton insurrection had failed because the communists did not set up soviets!¹³⁴ Not a word was said about the fact that Stalin and Bukharin had specifically prohibited a soviet policy and insisted on an impossible tactic based on pure localized violence. The “putschist” leaders, who were now attacked for what was nothing but the faithful application of Stalin’s foolhardy instructions, learned with some surprise that “the Canton Commune opened the soviet period”.¹³⁵

After this post-mortem, the congress prophesied an “inevitable” new rising tide of revolution. Throughout the whole world, a new wave of revolutionary offensive was supposedly approaching, and this would serve the purpose of sweeping the Chinese revolution upward to new and glorious heights.¹³⁶ The party must prepare the masses throughout the country for a tremendous, nationally organized soviet revolution. “Winning over the masses” must be the main slogan in the coming struggles. To win the masses, the “unproletarian concept” of “putschism” (“military adventurism by a few”) must be abandoned, and a drive must be undertaken to develop a greater measure of democracy within the party. In some cases, tactical alliances with the petty

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

bourgeoisie and the rich peasants would be necessary, but at the same time it would be of primary importance "to lead the laboring people against all exploiters". All sections of the Kuomintang must be fought with equal energy, as well as the "third party", which the nationalists were trying to organize to win over the masses to their side.¹³⁷

This was in 1928. Stalin, in the meantime, had succeeded in suppressing the Trotskyist opposition, and could now afford to take over many of the policies formerly advocated by his rival. To a large extent, Stalin's ultra-leftism, like his previous right-wing policy, was dictated by the internal politics of the U.S.S.R. To fight Trotsky, Stalin had allied himself with the right wing of the C.P.S.U. He had helped men like Bukharin and Rykov to rise to influential positions, in order to have their support against Trotsky. But now that the left opposition was defeated and expelled from the party, the right wing became bothersome. Stalin intended to build "Socialism in One Country". The Right was opposed to his program of intensive industrialization and collectivization. Therefore it had to be destroyed, in the name of leftism and radicalism. As in the case of the struggle against the Left, Stalin carried this new battle against the Right over into the International. Since Bukharin and Rykov were not only against collectivization in Russia but *also* against soviets in China, Stalin spoke *for* soviets in China. He conclusively proved thereby his complete scepticism regarding revolutions outside Russia, (for he cannot possibly have believed in the success of the Chinese soviets), and his cynical disregard of the value of the foreign communists' lives.¹³⁸

The phase of violent insurrections and bloody reprisals only came to an end two years later, when a true leader of great stature and wisdom succeeded in imposing his views in China. That leader was Mao Tse-tung, who, while pretending to agree with Stalin, actually put an end to the insane policy based on the wrong assumption that the revolutionary tide was rising. Knowing that it was *not* rising, Mao retreated to the countryside and began his long and patient labor of organization and construction. But that lies outside the framework of our study. We leave the Chinese revolution at the moment where the communists, isolated and defeated, pretended that all was well, and wasted their strength and blood in useless uprisings.

11. SUMMARY.

The Comintern participation in the Chinese revolution thus passed through three distinct phases.

The first phase, which lasted from 1924 to the spring of 1927, was based on wholehearted cooperation with the Kuomintang and with

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 144-153.

¹³⁸ Cf. Deutscher, *Stalin*, p. 403. Deutscher points out the same factors in the case of Stalin's ultra-left German policy — which enabled Hitler to seize power.

Chiang Kai-shek. This phase was subdivided into two periods. At first, the Comintern played a leading role in the administration of revolutionary Canton. Under pressure from Chiang Kai-shek, who wished to break the communist-nationalist deadlock existing in Canton, the International then agreed to launch the Northern Expedition in the direction of Shanghai and Hankow. In the course of this expedition, both the communists and the nationalists enlarged their basis of mass support: the peasants joined the communists in the name of agrarian revolution, while the Shanghai capitalists eagerly awaited the coming of Chiang, who would be able to save them from the red menace. The communists, along with the left wing of the Kuomintang, established their capital at Hankow, while Chiang entered Shanghai. The E.C.C.I., dominated by the Stalin group, ordered the Chinese communists to seek to continue the alliance with Chiang Kai-shek, claiming that the revolution was still in the "bourgeois-democratic stage" and needed the participation of the "national bourgeoisie". The communists' conciliatory policy only served to hasten their destruction in Shanghai, at the hands of Chiang Kai-shek, who had used them and needed them no more.

The second phase, which began after Chiang's counter-revolutionary *coup*, was marked by the communists' cooperation with the left wing of the Kuomintang at Hankow. Stalin, in order to oppose Trotsky's "Western", proletarian-revolutionary stand, ordered the Chinese communists to continue making concessions to the left nationalists, and to calm down the peasants. The fermentation among the latter was so strong, however, that the E.C.C.I., basing itself on Mao's report and on the urging of China experts such as M. N. Roy, had to agree to an agrarian reform of a rather drastic nature. This step to the Left induced the left Kuomintang to break with the communists and to suppress the peasant movement. The Comintern had suffered its second defeat in China.

The third phase began when Stalin ordered the remnants of the Chinese communist forces to launch an ultra-revolutionary offensive, and — eventually — to establish soviets. This policy was useless and suicidal, since it lacked mass support and only led to the decimation of the communist forces, who were now being encircled and attacked by the armies of both the right and the left Kuomintang.

The first and second phases, when the Stalinist leadership ordered the Chinese communists to follow a policy of moderation, were determined not merely by the Leninist analysis of the bourgeois-democratic character of revolutions in underdeveloped countries, but primarily by Russian domestic politics. Stalin was fighting his great battle against the Trotskyist opposition, which was rising against him in the name of leftism as against rightism, of permanent revolution as against the consolidation of the Soviet State, of the revolt of the masses as against bureaucratic control from above. To defeat the opposition, Stalin carried his right-wing tactics over from the U.S.S.R. to the international scene, in order to smite the Trotskyists not only at home but also abroad.

The third phase, — which, unlike the first and second, could not possibly be justified by any Leninist theory — came after the defeat of Trotsky. Stalin was now turning against his former allies of the Right. In this struggle as in the previous one, he was attacking them — this time in the name of leftism — both on the domestic and the international scene.

The Chinese revolution thus represented the culmination of a long process of development of the U.S.S.R. and of the Comintern. It showed, in the first place, the complete “Eastern” trend of the Comintern — away from proletarian revolution in Europe, and toward nationalist revolution in Asia. And in the second place, it proved the completion of the process of absolute subordination of the International to the Russian government, the affirmation of the principle that henceforth the revolution was identical with the U.S.S.R., and that the non-Russian communists had become mere auxiliary agents of the men who dominated the political scene in Moscow.

VIII

THE SIXTH CONGRESS OF THE COMINTERN

The years 1926-1927 had brought about the climax and the subsequent decline of certain nationalist movements in underdeveloped countries. The great uprisings in the Arab world—the Rif and Syria—had been suppressed. The Indonesian revolt, at the end of 1926, had failed to grow into a real overall revolution. The Chinese nationalists had turned against their communist allies and made peace with the foreign powers. The Chinese question had become the principal one as far as the national and colonial problem was concerned. China was the great test case. Inevitably therefore, the Comintern's discussions about the future of the colonial countries continued to revolve around China to a large extent, even after the definite break with the Kuomintang and the initiation of the ultra-left policy.

1. A POST-MORTEM ANALYSIS OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION.

The Stalinist group which henceforth controlled the International was certain that the setback in China, in Indonesia and in other countries was only temporary. Stalin and his followers analyzed the new situation to mean an intensification of class conflicts. Certain indications, such as England's new outbursts of hostility toward the Soviet Union, the passage of the Chinese nationalists to the counter-revolutionary side, the downfall of the insurrectionary movements in the Arab countries and Indonesia, a political swing to the right in England and France, convinced the Stalinists that the capitalist world was entering a new phase of aggressiveness, and that the Soviet Union was threatened by war. The threat of war served to justify Stalin's policy of building socialism in a single country, and of subordinating all foreign Communist Parties to the leadership of the Soviet State. It also served to justify the idea that revolutionary class struggles were entering a new and more intense phase. According to a rather abstract type of Marxist reasoning, the growing intransigence of the world bourgeoisie was the sign of increasing instability of the capitalist order. But the basic reason for Stalin's new left-wing policy in the International was simply, that he was fighting the "right deviationists" and undertaking highly revolutionary measures inside Russia, and that these measures were quite automatically carried over into the Comintern's domain, regardless of whether a concrete basis existed to justify them or not.

If the class conflicts were to be sharpened throughout the world, then the counter-revolutionary activities of the Kuomintang in China were simply the sign of a coming upsurge of a more violent revolutionary wave. Thus Stalin's and Li Li-San's ultra-left tactics in China received an explanation which sounded plausible enough. Unfortunately, this explanation was in flagrant contradiction to the facts of the Chinese scene. The Kuomintang's passing into the counter-revolutionary camp meant, indeed, a strengthening of the capitalist forces but it did not mean a new upsurge of the oppressed classes to counter it. The Chinese workers and peasants had been defeated, and Stalin's and Li Li-san's policy of bloody uprisings only served to render that defeat more profound and more obvious.

At the ninth plenum of the E.C.C.I., in February 1928, the Stalinist majority attacked the remnants of the Trotskyist opposition for not sharing Stalin's view about the class struggle entering a "higher phase". Because the Trotskyists maintained that the revolutionary upsurge of the world's toilers had already come to an end, and that the E.C.C.I.'s mistakes had led to its defeat, they were labeled "anti-proletarian" and "counter-revolutionary opportunist".¹ It was resolved that the Trotskyist opposition had objectively passed into the ranks of the Social-Democrats, who were tools of the bourgeoisie. Therefore the opposition must be expelled from the International. "The intensification of the communists' struggle against international Social Democracy inevitably means the intensification of their struggle against the anti-communist group of the Trotskyites, in the U.S.S.R. as well as in other countries".²

The Chinese revolution was seen by the plenum as "entering a higher phase". The present situation in China, said the plenum's resolution, "leads toward... the passage of the whole revolutionary mass movement in China into its new soviet phase".³ The very brutality of the counter-revolutionaries, the very intensity of the white terror "pushes the masses into the path of further revolutionary struggle".⁴

It was therefore necessary, the resolution continued, for the Chinese Communist Party to take the leadership of the masses, in complete independence from all other political groups.⁶

Thus the Stalinists were advocating, *after* the defeat of the Chinese communists, the tactics which Trotsky had proposed *before* that defeat, when there might have been a chance, albeit a very slim one, of carrying them to a successful conclusion.

At the same time, the resolution recognized that the ultra-left terrorist policy had been carried too far, and that the new revolutionary upsurge had to be prepared, not by sudden suicidal insurrections of

¹ *Résolutions adoptées à la IX^e session plénière du C.E. de l'I.C.*, p. 18.

² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

desperate minorities, but by a patient work of agitation and of organization of a red army in the countryside.⁶

Finally, the plenum called on all sections of the Communist International to “fight the slanderous assertion of the Social Democrats and Trotskyites, to the effect that the Chinese revolution is liquidated”.⁷

Thus the Stalinist majority did everything in its power to represent the Comintern's defeat in the colonial countries as a victory.

While claiming that the Chinese revolution was entering its soviet phase, the plenum strongly denied, however, that it was “permanent” in the Trotskyist sense. The passage into the soviet phase did not mean a direct passage from the bourgeois-democratic to the socialist revolution—as Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution postulated—but simply a struggle to complete the bourgeois democratic tasks through soviet methods. This was quite in conformity with Lenin's theses at the second congress. Whether Lenin would have agreed, however, that a new revolutionary upswing was taking place, which justified soviet methods at that particular time, is another question.

Bukharin repeated these same arguments at the fifteenth congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He expressed the conviction that the Chinese revolution was rushing upward into a higher phase. As an example, he cited the fact that peasant soviets had been formed in the Hupeh province, and that the peasants had beheaded almost four hundred landlords. Bukharin's audience applauded wildly and a voice yelled: “This is not enough, cut off more heads!”⁸ The congress honestly seemed to believe Bukharin's optimistic assertions, unaware of the fact that these peasant uprisings were isolated acts of despair rather than the expression of a broad concerted mass movement.

Bukharin insisted on the fact that the lessons of the Chinese revolution could not be applied to other countries automatically. The situation in each country had to be taken in itself and evaluated according to its local peculiarities. In India, for example, it would not be possible to conclude a long-term alliance with the national bourgeoisie, as had been done in China. The Indian national bourgeoisie had *already* passed over to the counter-revolutionary side, because the British had made various economic concessions to it.⁹

Trotsky took his pen in hand and carried on a violent campaign against the unfounded optimism of Stalin and Bukharin. Time after time, he denounced the errors which, in his opinion, had caused the defeat of the Chinese revolution.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁸ N. Bukharin, *La situation internationale et les tâches de l'I.C.; Rapport au XV^e congrès du P.C. de l'U.R.S.S.*, p. 70.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 73-75. Strange statement, in the light of later events. It seems to imply that Chiang Kai-shek was more anti-imperialist than the Mahatma Gandhi or the Pandit Nehru!

The Stalinists' basic mistake, according to Trotsky, lay in the very assumption that a revolution could be carried out in a limited national framework. Imperialism had welded the whole world into a single economic unit; therefore the anti-imperialist struggle could only succeed on the international level; it must fail whenever it should be limited to a single nation. It must be permanent: constantly spreading from the national to the international plane, and from bourgeois-democratic to socialist objectives, without any pause between one phase and another.¹⁰

Trotsky accused the Stalinist leadership of the International of simply placing a number of national programs side by side, instead of elaborating a single world program, into which the various national policies would become integrated quite automatically.¹¹

Trotsky denied that alliances with the bourgeois of colonial or semi-colonial countries could have a constructive revolutionary effect under any circumstances. He went as far as to deny that the young bourgeoisie of a colonized country could be revolutionary. The bourgeoisie of a colonial country, according to Trotsky, could never fight for the achievement of the bourgeois-democratic revolution by its own volition. It could only in some cases be *driven* to fight in a revolutionary spirit. The force driving it temporarily to the Left could only be the proletariat and no other. Otherwise, the bourgeoisie would leave the democratic revolution uncompleted, out of fear of the property-less masses which were following it and seeking to push it onward. Thus the bourgeois-democratic revolution could only be carried out under the leadership of the working class but not under that of the bourgeoisie. The proletariat must therefore take over the leadership of the national revolution, without any compromise with the bourgeoisie, *from the very beginning*.¹² In a colonial and semi-colonial country, as the Chinese example had shown, the bourgeoisie was thoroughly opportunistic, pretending to be truly revolutionary whenever it sought to use the workers' forces for its own class purposes, but relapsing into a reactionary attitude as soon as its narrow class aims were attained.¹³ Furthermore, Trotsky claimed that the bourgeoisie of the Eastern countries is by its very nature more treacherous, corrupt and cowardly than that of the West.¹⁴ The Eastern bourgeoisie possesses these deplorable traits because of its close association with the feudal landowners, he explained. Since the capitalists of the colonial and semi-colonial countries frequently are scions of feudal land-owning families, they are unwilling to carry on a struggle against the feudal system, which would mean antagonizing their own cousins, and frequently depriving themselves of a part of their inherit-

¹⁰ L.D. Trotsky, *Die permanente Revolution*.

¹¹ L.D. Trotsky, *L'Internationale communiste après Lénine*, p. 96.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 266-267.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

ance. Feudal land-ownership and capitalist property are often held by one and the same person. According to Trotsky, this was more true in China than it had been in tsarist Russia. While the Russian revolution was capable, therefore, of passing through a liberal phase before turning socialist, in China the revolution should have had a workers' and peasants' class character from its very beginning.¹⁵ The bourgeoisie had been counter-revolutionary from the start, even while it was half-heartedly fighting for limited class objectives, side by side with the toiling classes. Optimistically, Trotsky believed that the Chinese workers and peasants, far from being immediately crushed, could have carried the democratic revolution to a victorious conclusion if they had not subordinated themselves to bourgeois leadership by entering the Kuomintang.

The bourgeois revolution, Trotsky emphasized, cannot be carried to its conclusion by any other means than by the soviet dictatorship of the workers and peasants. And this soviet dictatorship of workers and peasants could not stop at the bourgeois phase but must go on into the socialist revolution immediately.¹⁶

The objection that China was not ripe for socialism was irrelevant to Trotsky. No underdeveloped country, including Russia, could be ripe for socialism in isolation. The condition for the establishment of socialism anywhere was the spreading of the revolution to the advanced countries of the West. And if China (and Russia) were not ripe for socialism, this did not mean that they were not ripe for the dictatorship of the proletariat! The proletarian dictatorship could be established even in the most backward areas of the world, to finish the bourgeois revolution and to lay the bases for a construction of socialism, which would unfold fully as soon as the advanced countries of the West underwent their proletarian transformation. Since China had been conquered and enveloped by imperialist capital, she was no longer essentially feudal but essentially capitalist, and therefore ready for the establishment of the soviet dictatorship!¹⁷

While Stalin was highly conscious of the importance of the peasantry, in a colonial revolution, Trotsky rather minimized that importance. Stalin had stated that in underdeveloped countries the communists must make concessions to the peasantry and even join "two-class" political parties. Trotsky replied that two-class parties only serve to weaken the proletariat and to strengthen the bourgeoisie. The peasants are a floating, anonymous mass, he argued, and incapable of independent action. They only have the choice of following either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. And the proletariat can only provide efficient leadership when its own class and party programs are clear and straight. "A workers'-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-278.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

and-peasants' [two-class] party can only be a base, a screen, a spring-board for the bourgeoisie." ¹⁸

Finally, Trotsky protested vehemently against Stalin's ultra-left policy in China. He pointed out that it was too late for this, that the revolutionary wave had subsided, that the Chinese ruling classes were stabilized, and that Stalin's talk about a new revolutionary upsurge had no concrete factual basis whatsoever. He demanded that the Chinese communists, rather than to spill the blood of the masses purposelessly, should carry out a strategic retreat and adjust themselves to the facts of their defeat. They should for the moment limit themselves to the reasonable, feasible tactical demand of a *democratic Constituent Assembly*. ¹⁹ While Trotsky had demanded a pure communist and left-wing movement as long as the masses were in motion, and as long as there was a tiny chance that such a program might succeed, he now realized, quite correctly, that a period of downswing and defeat had come, and that such a period required the temporary cessation of open insurrection, and the tactical use of merely democratic and reformist slogans. By making the masses strive for such a program, the communists would be able to lay the foundations for a new eventual revolutionary upswing. Stalin's use of bloody ultra-left tactics *after* the defeat only served to alienate and frighten the masses.

Trotsky's viewpoint had been completely suppressed and silenced by the time of the Comintern's sixth congress. Through administrative measures, through bureaucratic control over the whole apparatus of the Soviet State and of the International, Stalin had succeeded in destroying his opponent.

But the defeat of Trotsky's viewpoint was not due merely to personal factors. It was basically due to the fact that proletarian revolution had failed in the West. This failure had caused the "Eastern" group, headed by Stalin, to rise to power. The failure of the Western international revolution had rendered the predominance of Eastern *national* revolutions inevitable. And it had therefore rendered inevitable the predominance of the *national* power of the Soviet State over the international organization of the Comintern. And this inevitable limitation of revolutionary control to a single state had in its turn rendered possible the emergence of a bureaucracy. This bureaucracy was eager to hold on to its new-found power. Almost unconsciously, it concretized that desire by issuing, through the mouth of Stalin, the theory of Socialism in One Country. Socialism in one country implied the permanence of national bureaucratic control in Russia. ²⁰ And it also implied a struggle to the death against impenitent "Westerners"

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

²⁰ Isaac Deutscher has written a brilliant analysis of the psychological implications of the theory of Socialism in One Country in his *Stalin*; "A Political Biography, pp. 288-291.

such as Trotsky, who, against all evidence, persisted doggedly in looking to Europe for a revolutionary example which that continent was unable or unwilling to give. Trotsky, the prophet of Western proletarian revolution, who wished to transport Western formulas to the colonial countries of the East, had to fall before Stalin, the administrator of the national democratic revolution of the East, who had no illusions, either in regard to Europe or to the strength of the Eastern working class.²¹

But after his victory over Trotsky, Stalin became convinced that a new revolutionary upsurge was coming throughout the world. This conviction was simply an expression of the Soviet leaders' own determination to industrialize and collectivize their country. Since the Comintern had been reduced to a mere tool of the Soviet State, the new revolutionary drive, which had its proper role to play *inside Russia*, was applied to the International as well. And it so happened, that the revolutionary possibilities existing inside Russia were *not* accompanied by similar revolutionary possibilities abroad. Nevertheless, the sixth congress of the International adopted on all levels, including the colonial question, an ultra-revolutionary program. This program reflected the fact that Stalin, after defeating Trotsky's left opposition, was now fighting the right opposition in Russia, and its foreign partisans as well. The objective futility of this new ultra-left program, which only served as a fighting platform against the right wing, but did not correspond to any really existing revolutionary situation, indicated that the Comintern had completely ceased to be anything but an organ of Soviet Russian state policy. At least for the time being, the Third International had lost its intimate contact, not only with the workers of the Western countries, but even with the revolutionary nationalists of the East and of the colonial areas.

2. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE SIXTH CONGRESS.

The sixth congress of the Communist International was prepared by the E.C.C.I. more carefully than any of the preceding congresses. It was to be that of the new "monolithic" International, disciplined, hierarchic, and subject to the orders of Stalin's group. Before the congress, the E.C.C.I. issued various publications, in which the basic Stalinist line was laid down: the setback of certain nationalist re-

²¹ In a sense, the outlook of Trotsky and of his followers corresponds to the period of classical Marxism, and fails to take into account the formidable strengthening of modern state power, which has rendered the classical type of revolution (barricades, Bastille-storming) well-nigh obsolete in the advanced countries. It also fails to take into account the phenomenon of fascism, which is different from classical reaction, and which, as Nazism showed, can only be destroyed by an alliance of revolutionary and democratic state powers, but not by spontaneous mass uprisings.

volutionary movements was purely temporary; if only indicated that the class struggle was becoming more intense throughout the world, and that a new international revolutionary upsurge would accompany the drive toward the construction of socialism in the U.S.S.R. This doctrine was intended to counteract both the left and the right oppositions' stands. The theory of a new revolutionary upsurge countered the Trotskyist accusation, according to which Stalin had led the Comintern to defeat, and at the same time represented an argument against the right opposition, which proposed a policy of moderation and concessions both inside the U.S.S.R. and in the International. By defending Stalin's switch to the extreme Left, Bukharin was preparing his own downfall, for he belonged precisely to that "right opposition" which Stalin was trying to suppress.

For the colonies and semi-colonies, the tactics of collaboration with the bourgeoisie, which up to 1927 had been the official doctrine, were rejected. The new tactics for all colonial and underdeveloped countries consisted in ultra-left class struggle.

Regarding India, for example, the E.C.C.I. wrote at this time that "the national movement of India is entering a new phase, richer in revolutionary possibilities than any of the preceding ones".²² All alliances with the bourgeoisie, including the latter's left wing, were to be rejected. The left wing of the bourgeois nationalist party was, as a matter of fact, even more dangerous than the right. "Linked organizationally to the bourgeois political party, politically directed by it, the nationalist left wing, with its slogans of independence, social equality and socialism, has become an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie, to penetrate the toiling masses, and to mislead these masses, whose development as an independent political force would otherwise lead them to discover the difference existing between the bourgeois' struggle and the struggle of the proletarians against imperialism."²³ The E.C.C.I. maintained that for some time the workers and peasants had been showing an increasing awareness of their class interests and a growing hostility toward the nationalist bourgeoisie, and concluded: "Henceforth conditions are such that the toiling masses can become an independent political force, under the leadership of the proletariat..."²⁴ This meant that the period of the united front with the revolutionary nationalists was over, and that the Communist Party should act independently of the upper classes, and set up soviets, *as though* the proletarian revolution had already taken place in the West. Only with the poor peasants should a class alliance be continued, and for that class alliance the formula of the workers' and peasants' (two-class) party remained valid.²⁵ Such a party, however, could not be considered a

²² E.C.C.I., *L'activité de P.I.C. du V^e au VI^e congrès*, p. 624.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 628.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 632.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 634-636.

substitute for a strong independent Communist Party, which must in any case be built up at the same time.²⁶

Regarding Indonesia, the E.C.C.I. deplored the fact that the crushing of the insurrection of 1926-1927 had driven the masses back into the arms of the nationalists. But from this it did not draw the conclusion that a new alliance should be concluded with the nationalist left wing.²⁷ The communists were instructed, on the contrary, to compete with the nationalists, and to win the masses away from them.

References to the colonial problem can be found both in the overall program and in the specific tactical theses and resolutions drafted by the sixth congress. In the program, one finds certain general reflections on the different types of revolutions, which constitute a very thorough-going continuation and elaboration of the second congress' theses. The sixth congress' more specific *tactical* theses on the colonial question, however, had a more limited validity, inasmuch as they reflected Moscow's ultra-left and uncompromising mood at the beginning of the five-year plans and the collectivization.

3. THE GENERAL PROGRAM.

Certain sections of the general program elaborated by the sixth congress seem to constitute merely a continuation of Lenin's teachings. The program stated that the international socialist revolution is uneven in its development. In the advanced countries, it assumes a definitely proletarian and socialist character, while in the more backward regions it is bourgeois nationalist. Even the latter type of revolution must be considered a part of the overall world-wide struggle for socialism, however, inasmuch as it objectively aids the world revolution to proceed to its victorious conclusion. The following types of countries can be distinguished, in regard to revolutionary development: a) Countries in which capitalism is highly developed; b) Countries in which capitalism has reached a medium degree of development (Spain, Portugal, Poland, Hungary, the Balkans); c) Colonial and semi-colonial countries (China, India, etc.) ; and dependent countries (Argentina, Brazil, etc.) ; d) Even more backward areas (Central Africa, etc.).²⁸

The first type of countries is immediately ripe for the socialist revolution of the proletariat. In the second type, the bourgeois-democratic revolution must be completed by the proletariat, with the possibility to pass on from the democratic to socialist tasks, without an intermediary pause. In any event, the proletariat of these lands needs the steadfast support of the peasantry, which it must support in the realiza-

²⁶ E.C.C.I., *The C.I. Between the Fifth and the Sixth World Congresses, 1924-1928*, p. 477.

²⁷ This nationalist left wing had become embodied in the newly-founded Indonesian Nationalist Party, headed by Dr. Soekarno and others.

²⁸ *Thèses et résolutions du VI^e congrès de l'I.C.*, p. 8.

tion of the agrarian revolution.²⁹ The third type of countries (colonial, semi-colonial or dependent) makes it necessary for the proletariat to support the forces of the bourgeois, anti-feudal and anti-imperialist revolution. "The passage to the dictatorship of the proletariat, as a general rule, is possible in these countries only by way of a series of preparatory phases, by way of a general gradual transformation of the bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution. In most cases, the success of the building of socialism in these countries is conditioned by the direct support of the countries under proletarian dictatorship."³⁰ In the very backward areas of the fourth type, the overall national struggle against imperialist domination must be carried out. After the achievement of national liberation, these countries could go on directly to socialism, without passing through the capitalist phase. The very fact that they do not have a native bourgeoisie, should render the "skipping" of the capitalist stage quite easy and natural. This direct passage to socialism could only take place, of course, if the countries under proletarian dictatorship gave active aid to the country in question.

In general, the colonial and underdeveloped countries were to be considered as analogous, on the world scale, to the *countryside*, while the industrialized regions were analogous to the *city*. Thus a very close parallelism was seen to exist between the colonial populations and the *peasantry* of a given country.³¹

While these general considerations were essentially a restatement of Lenin's ideas, the specific theses on the colonial question reflected the new tactical spirit, based on ultra-leftism and on the substitution of the Soviet Union for the West.

4. THE THESES.

The theses of the congress on the colonial question must be linked to the overall analysis which the congress made of the world situation. This overall analysis is shown most clearly in the Manifesto, in which the congress stated that capitalism was entering a new phase of aggressiveness, due to the loss of its temporary stability, and that the Western states were seeking to provoke a war against the Soviet Union.³² In this aggressive drive against the workers' state, the social democrats were entirely on the side of the capitalists. The communists should therefore fight as intransigently as never before, for control over the working class. Also, "from the point of view of the interest of the proletariat, it is more necessary than ever to establish the unity of the industrial proletariat with the toiling masses of the colonies".³³

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

It should be noted, as symptomatic of the radicalism of the new line, that unity was advocated, not simply with the *people* of the colonies (including the nationalist bourgeoisie), as at previous congresses, but with the *toiling masses* (workers and poor peasants of these colonies). This meant that instead of united fronts with the nationalist bourgeoisie, the policy of the formation of soviets should generally be applied.

Lenin had stated at the second congress, that the colonial revolutionaries could jump over the capitalist stage and use immediate soviet methods *only* if the proletarian revolution took place in the West. The sixth congress, however, declared what follows:

"The alliance of the U.S.S.R. with the revolutionary proletariat of the imperialist countries creates for the toiling masses of the peoples of China, India, and of all backward colonial and semi-colonial countries the possibility of an independent and free economic and cultural development, *skipping the phase of domination by the capitalist regime* and even the development of capitalist relations in general."³⁴

The influence of Stalin's theory of Socialism in a Single Country can be seen in this. If Russia could substitute her own efforts to those of the Western proletariat, and build socialism alone, *then she could also take the place of the West in relation to the underdeveloped and colonial countries*. Lenin's theory, according to which the construction of socialism in the West in a prerequisite for socialism in the colonies, was thus amended to state that the *construction of socialism in the U.S.S.R.* was a sufficient prerequisite for the same development in Asia and Africa. *The U.S.S.R. had taken the place of the West* in Bolshevik theory. And that change manifested itself in regard to the colonial as well as in regard to other problems.

The theses, after some introductory remarks about the new centers of anti-imperialist unrest—mainly Latin America (Nicaragua, Mexico, Bolivia, Paraguay, Venezuela, Brazil)—proceed to analyze the economic and political characteristics of colonialism.

Colonialism, according to the theses, never serves to improve the lot of the masses in the underdeveloped areas, but rather tends to intensify their misery by adding a new form of exploitation (capitalism) to the already existing one (feudalism). The former is superimposed on the latter.³⁵ Colonial capitalism is interested in preserving feudalism and in maintaining the colonies in a backward condition, so as to keep a market for industrial goods. It only develops such sectors of the colony's economy as directly serve its own interests, while keeping the colony itself in a condition of economic disequilibrium and dependence.³⁶ Colonial capitalism, the theses continued, destroys the small independent

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 165-166.

³⁶ Roy, who had opposed that over-simplified analysis, had fallen into disgrace for opposing Stalin's ultra-leftism.

peasant properties and the traditional handicrafts, thereby creating a large landless sub-proletariat. Since colonialism fails, on the other hand, to industrialize the country and to absorb this sub-proletariat into industrial production, and ever more severe problem of over-population and under-employment arises.³⁷

In opposition to Roy's theory of "de-colonization",—claiming that the development of native capitalism in India corresponds to the economic interest of the British industrial bourgeoisie—the congress' theses only speak of "strategic" reasons for which the colonialists followed an exceptional policy in India.³⁸

After these overall considerations, the theses proceed to plan the communist strategy and tactics in India, in China, and in similar "colonial" countries.

The basic tasks applicable to all colonies were extremely radical:

"a) Modify the relationship of forces in favor of the proletariat, liberate the country from the yoke of imperialism..., create national unity where it is not yet realized; ... organize workers' and peasants' soviets and a red army; install the dictatorship of the proletarians and the peasants...

"b) Carry out the agrarian revolution...

"d) Establish the equality of nationalities and sexes... separate Church and State and abolish castes; political education and general raising of the intellectual level of the masses, etc."³⁹

In working for the accomplishment of these tasks, the communist parties must take care not to trust the bourgeoisie, even in the latter should temporarily join the national emancipation movement. The bourgeoisie is always by its very class nature "national-reformist", while the proletariat, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie are "national-revolutionary".⁴⁰ Care must be taken, in dealing with the national-reformist bourgeoisie, to avoid two erroneous attitudes. One error would consist in losing sight of the weakness of the national-reformists, in over-estimating them, and in submitting to their leadership. The other error would be that of under-estimating the strength of the reformists, and of launching a revolutionary action without adequate preparation. This latter, sectarian error manifests itself through the medium of "putschist" tactics—hopeless insurrections by armed minorities.⁴¹

The theses did not mention the fact that both tactical deviations had been committed in China under the open orders of the Stalinist

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 173-174.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 175-177.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

leadership. According to the official version, the responsible ones were the local Chinese leaders, and not the E.C.C.I.

The theses not only rejected the idea of alliances with the national bourgeoisie, but expressed considerable caution in regard to the *petty bourgeoisie* as well. They warned against an over-estimation of the urban middle class in the colonies. The small artisans made good revolutionary material, but generally had dangerous reactionary-utopian ideas.⁴² The small merchants were revolutionary only if they dealt exclusively in local products. As soon as they became sellers of imported "imperialist" merchandise, however, they would betray their brothers and take a counter-revolutionary attitude.⁴³ Relatively the best elements of the petty bourgeoisie were the intellectuals. Some of them, however, showed a tendency to abandon the revolutionary ranks after the achievement of certain limited democratic objectives.⁴⁹ On the other hand the very poor petty bourgeoisie (street-vendors, jobless intellectuals, ruined peasants) were extremely revolutionary and reliable.

The theses stated that the peasants passed through several stages. At the beginning of the struggle against feudalism, the whole peasantry would follow the leadership of the proletariat. Later, however, the difference between poor and well-to-do peasants would become more marked, and only the former would continue to be reliable allies of the communists.⁴⁵

The theses then warned against sweeping generalizations. The specific tactics should be worked out for each country with reference to the local situation.⁴⁶

The theses decidedly rejected the idea of a permanent bloc with even the *petty bourgeois* parties. Stalin's theory of the two-class party, which had been considered valid during the moderate period before 1927, was thus rejected, with the consent of its author. Not only the right, but also the left wing of such parties as the Kuomintang, the Wafd and the Swaraj, were thus condemned.⁴⁷ Temporary alliances might be concluded, but no organic fusion.

The immediate tasks of the communists in the colonies and semi-colonies would thus be the following:

1. "Creation and development of communist parties in the colonial and semi-colonial countries."
2. "Work inside the trade unions."

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁴⁶ This was a pious wish, in flagrant contradiction to the new ultra-centralized character which the Comintern had acquired under the domination of the U.S.S.R. and Stalin.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 183-184.

3. "Work inside the peasant organizations." This, however, should no longer be done on the basis of "workers' and peasants'" (two-class) parties. Such parties were unreliable.
4. "Work among the youth organizations."
5. "Work among the women."⁴⁸

After enumerating these *overall* tasks, the theses proceeded to indicate specific tactics for various countries.

In China, the armed insurrection of the workers and peasants should be prepared, to overthrow imperialism, feudalism, the Kuomintang, the social-democrats, and to carry the bourgeois-democratic revolution to its full conclusion. Both the right and the left deviations inside the communist party were to be fought relentlessly. The immediate slogans were to be: 1) Down with imperialism!; 2) Confiscation of foreign property and banks; 3) Unification of the country on the basis of each national minority's right to self-determination; 4) Down with the militarists and the Kuomintang!; 5) All power to the soviets;! 6) Eight-hour day, wage raises, social security; 7) Confiscation of feudal properties and their distribution among the peasants and soldiers; 8) Single progressive income tax; 9) Alliance of China with the U.S.S.R.⁴⁹

In India, a powerful communist party should be organized to lead the proletarians and peasants against the imperialists and the upper-class nationalists, and to fight for the establishment of an Indian Soviet Republic. The communists must gain control of the trade unions and the peasant leagues, and "unmask" the social-democrats and other reformists.⁵⁰

In Indonesia, the party must transfer its main center of activity from the countryside to the towns and thus become truly proletarian. It must fight the social-democrats mercilessly, and "unmask" the nationalists, in order to win the masses away from them.⁵¹

In Korea, the party must proclaim the need to link the struggle against Japanese imperialism to the struggle for an agrarian revolution. But the Korean "line" exceptionally was more moderate than that laid down for the other countries. Instead of attacking and "unmasking" the nationalist leaders, the party should rather try to unify all nationalist groups into a single united front.⁵²

In Egypt, the party's main efforts must be directed at the organization of class-conscious trade unions.⁵³

In French North Africa, the "line" was, like in the case of Korea, slightly more moderate. The party should "work inside all the already

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 188-193.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-195.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-197.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

existing nationalist organizations, in order to unite all truly revolutionary elements on the basis of the clear and coherent program of a fighting workers' and peasants' bloc. Work to transform the Etoile Nord-Africaine⁵⁴ from a closed party into a fighting bloc of different revolutionary organizations, with collective adhesion of the trade unions... the peasant unions, etc." At the same time, the party should fight for the fraternal union of French and Muslim workers in the same organizations.⁵⁵

In the Americas and in Africa, revolutionary agitation among the Negroes must be intensified. In the United States, the race question must be definitely linked to the class struggle, with energetic "unmasking" of the reformist colored bourgeoisie, the N.A.A.C.P., and such fantastic movements as Marcus Garvey's African Blood Brotherhood. Unity of white and colored workers inside the same labor unions was essential. The almost enslaved Negro masses in the Southern states should be encouraged to demand their right to secession and the establishment of a Negro republic covering the areas in which the oppressed race constituted the majority of the population.⁵⁶ In South Africa the communists should fight simultaneously for the equality of White, Negro, Indian and Colored workers, and for the establishment of "an independent native republic, guaranteeing the rights of the white minority". In Central Africa, the Negro workers on the plantations and in the mines should be encouraged to organize unions and to launch strikes and armed insurrections. The closest co-operation must be established between the white workers of the colonialist countries and their African class comrades.⁵⁷

In Latin America, the communists must take an active part in all revolutionary movements directed against "Yankee imperialism" and against feudalism, "even in cases where such movements are still under the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie". But such alliances with the petty bourgeoisie should be purely temporary, and under no circumstances must the communists submit to the leadership of the latter, or fail to present an independent program. Such independent programs must demand: "The confiscation (without indemnization) of the large plantations and 'latifundios', a part of them to be turned over to the agricultural laborers for the purpose of collective cultivation, and the rest to be distributed among the peasants, farmers and settlers; ... the confiscation of foreign establishments... and of the most important establishments of the national bourgeoisie and the large landowners; annulment of state debts...; establishment of the eight-hour working day...; arming of the workers and peasants and transformation of the army into a workers' and peasants' militia". Furthermore a soviet go-

⁵⁴ Revolutionary left-nationalist party founded in 1926 by Messali Hadj and others.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

vernment must be established, to exercise the democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry. On the trade union front, a relentless struggle was to be carried on against the syndico-anarchists and social-democrats. Organizationally, the Latin American communist parties should establish close links with the Communist Party of the U.S.A. ⁵⁸

The theses criticized the communists of the advanced colonialist countries for the insufficiency of their efforts in supporting the cause of the colonies. Through mass actions in the metropolises, all revolutionary stirrings in the colonies must be actively supported. The social-democratic reformists, who wished to humanize colonialism instead of fighting to abolish it, should be attacked and "unmasked" unceasingly. ⁵⁹

The sixth congress on this occasion admitted a certain number of communist parties of colonial and underdeveloped countries into the ranks of the International. These new members included the Communist Party of Cuba, of Korea, of Paraguay, the Irish Workers' League, the Socialist Party of Ecuador, and the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Colombia. ⁶⁰

A long and gradual dual process of development had come to an end. One aspect of this process was the victory of the "Eastern" over the "Western" orientation in international Marxist thought. The other aspect, intimately related to the first, was that of the submission of the International to the power of a single country, which was undertaking to carry out alone that construction of socialism which should have been the task of the workers of the whole world. From 1919 to 1927, the failure of revolution in the West forced the Eastern viewpoint, and *national* as opposed to *social* movements, into the forefront. By 1928, at the moment of the sixth congress, that process had ended by producing the complete embodiment of revolution in one state. And this embodiment of revolution in a single state in its turn produced an abandonment of the Eastern *as well* as the Western revolution, and the simple *reflection* of the revolutionary state's domestic policy in the International.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

CONCLUSION

From its very beginning, Marxism has been placed between two revolutions: the national, democratic overthrow of feudalism, and the social, communistic revolt against capitalism. Since only a small part of the world was fully capitalist, the possibility of socialist revolution was limited to that part. From Marx to Lenin, all communists who through their studies or their personal experience were aware of the immensity of the pre-capitalist world, threw their efforts into the struggle for the realization of the bourgeois-democratic (national) revolution, which had to take place in order to enlarge the basis of the eventual socialist upheaval.

Those communists, who like Marx, Engels and Lenin were aware of the greatness and imminence of the national and democratic tasks which must precede the socialist revolution, were constantly forced to struggle against those of their own comrades who kept their eyes turned steadily westward and hoped for an immediate outbreak of that great ultimate cataclysm which would usher in world socialism. A long series of ideological clashes took place, from 1848 to 1928, between those who believed that the socialist West would liberate the feudal East, and those who maintained that the national-revolutionary East would aid in the liberation of the capitalist West.

Before the October revolution and the creation of the third International, this conflict between Western- and Eastern-minded socialists and communists had been limited essentially to a discussion of the European scene. Marx and Engels were not aware of the fact that the national revolution could break out in Europe's overseas colonies as well as on the old continent itself. Marx made reference to the importance of the national revolts in Poland, Ireland and Germany — all European countries. It did not occur to him that Asia, Africa and Latin America would come to play a role analogous to that which Poland or Ireland were playing in his day. Marx and Engels believed that events would take place according to the following general pattern:

1. The national revolution of Central and Eastern Europe would precede and stimulate the establishment of socialism in the West.
2. The socialist revolution of the Western capitalist countries would then take place, drawing all less-developed areas, including the overseas colonies, along in its wake.

When Lenin took the Marxian heritage into his hands and moulded it to fit a later set of circumstances, the difference between the colonial

and the national questions had become smaller. While capitalism had held its own in the West, and while Central Europe had carried out its industrial and capitalist revolution, the overseas colonies had been drawn infinitely closer into the center of world politics than they had been during Marx's or even Engels' lifetime. Lenin saw the countries of Asia and Africa entering the political world scene and coming to play the same national-revolutionary role which Central and Eastern Europe had played in the days of Marx. Thus Lenin came to teach that the national and the colonial problem were one and the same. In his own reactionary and imperialist Russia, the revolt of subject nationalities could and must serve as an ally of the rebellious proletariat in the struggle against Tsardom. In the same way, in the whole huge capitalist world empire the oppressed peoples — the colonies — were to become the fellow fighters of the workers in the industrial centers. The socialist revolution of the industrial workers and the national-democratic uprisings of the colonial middle and lower classes would thus form the two component parts of a single world-wide invincible force, which would storm the Bastilles of Capital and raise the blood-red banner of the International over the ruins of the old order.

For the International—the world-wide united party of the proletariat — was to be the co-ordinating and guiding force of these two component parts. The capitalist world empire would be rent asunder by the double thrust of the industrial proletariat from within and of the rebellious colonial nations from without. Lenin followed in the footsteps of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in his relativist evaluation of the national emancipation movements. Marx and Engels had supported only those national movements which could offer “objective” aid to the great cause of socialist world revolution, and had quite brutally rejected and opposed those which occurred at an inappropriate moment and were a hindrance rather than a help to the international cause. Lenin followed the same basic reasoning, but he went further than Marx in as far as he *institutionalized* the two aspects of the communist national policy. He created an International whose different sections were so closely co-ordinated that they could produce the synthesis of the anti-capitalist struggle through two seemingly opposed tactical movements. The communists of the *dominant* country agitated for their colonies' right to become independent and lent active support to the struggle of the national bourgeoisie of these colonies. At the same time the communists of the *colony* fought for the establishment of the closest class unity between their own workers and those of the dominant country. Thus the bourgeois regime in the dominant country could be weakened or even destroyed by the rebellion of the colony, and the colonial people's craving for freedom could be satisfied with the help of the International. Once the metropolis had become socialist, however, the ties between the proletariat of the two countries could permit a new union between them. Thus half of the International should work for the *disintegration of the capitalist world*, while the other half at the same time laid the ground-

work for the *re-unification of the socialist world*, after the accomplishment of the proletarian revolution in the former dominant countries.

In order to embody this principle of dual tactics in his third International, Lenin had to fight an intense ideological battle against the ultra-revolutionary "Westerners", who believed that the proletarian upheaval in the industrial centers was imminent, that world socialism was immediately realizable, that any concern with national problems was a reactionary waste of time, since the imminent proletarian world revolution would settle all national problems almost automatically. The main propounders of this theory according to which the West would immediately produce a socialist world without needing the help of the national revolutionaries in the colonies were Rosa Luxemburg, Bukharin, Radek, Piatakov, and, in his own way, Lev Davidovitch Trotsky.

Lenin made his viewpoint prevail and the third International was built on the basis of his dual tactics in regard to the national problem. But the struggle between the "Western" and the "Eastern" tendencies was by no means over. The great question remained open: would the Western proletariat seize power at once, or would the Russian October Revolution remain, for a long time to come, the sole instance of the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship? Lenin prepared himself for both eventualities. At the Comintern's second congress (1920) he presented his theses on the colonial question, which implied two possibilities: if the West should turn socialist at once, it would be able to guide the underdeveloped countries and colonies toward socialism without their having to pass through the capitalist phase of development. If the West, on the other hand, failed to produce its communist revolution in the near future, the Eastern and colonial countries would have to carry out their bourgeois-democratic revolutions, which would be the struggle of their local capitalisms against the imperialism of the great powers, and which would aid in weakening world capital and in indirectly furthering the communist cause. In the first case, the communists in the colonies could immediately take ultra-left social measures and set up soviets which would prepare the passage from feudalism to socialism with the help of the victorious Western proletariat. In the latter case, however, the communists would be forced to support the revolutionary bourgeoisie of the colonies and fight for mere democratic, and not immediately socialist, ends. According to the overall political changes on the world scene from 1919 to 1928, the International hesitated between the two courses. Just as the great sluggish body of Mother Russia is stretched like a bridge between East and West, thus did her companion, the Comintern, stand between the two, between the workers of England, Germany and France and the peasants and soldiers of China, India, Indonesia and Iran. And just as Russia for times immemorial has alternated between a policy of expansion in the West and one of expansion in the East, thus did the Comintern alternate between phases of extreme concentration on the revolutionary proletarian stirrings of the centers of technical civiliza-

tion, and phases of almost exclusive attention to the national uprisings of the Eastern countries.

The policy of the Comintern regarding the colonial countries and the shifts in emphasis between East and West passed through the following essential phases:

From 1919 to 1920, the International had its eyes turned entirely to the West, and considered the East only as an auxiliary in the apparently imminent proletarian revolution.

From 1920 to 1923, i.e., from its second to its fourth congress, the Comintern devoted an equal amount of attention to the West and to the East and distributed its agitational activities very evenly among both.

From 1923 to 1927, i.e., from the fourth congress up to the *volte face* of the Kuomintang, the International devoted its greatest attention to the East and followed a policy of faithful cooperation with the revolutionary nationalists.

After 1927, and especially after the sixth congress, the Comintern, in spite of the absence of proletarian revolution in the West, entered a phase of ultra-leftism in the Eastern and colonial countries.

During the first period, before 1920, the Bolsheviks expected a proletarian revolution in Germany to break out any day. That revolution in Germany would cause all Europe to follow in the same path. Proletarian Europe would then aid Asia and Africa in passing from feudalism to socialism without going through a capitalist phase. The "Westerners", and particularly L.D. Trotsky, dominated the International. They were convinced that the Eastern revolutions would not precede but follow the Western events. Since the East should then be able to pass on directly to socialism, very radical policies were employed in the underdeveloped countries. By the summer of 1920, however, the revolutionary wave in the West came to a standstill. The Spartacists had been crushed in Germany, and the Red Army was stopped at the gates of Warsaw. The post-war social and economic crisis in the capitalist world began to lessen. At the second congress, Lenin therefore proclaimed his theses on the colonial question, indicating new tactics for the case that it should be necessary to co-operate with the Eastern bourgeois nationalists.

By the autumn of 1920, the second period very clearly began. The Bolsheviks saw that the European revolution would be delayed. A tactical retreat was undertaken. Inside Russia, this tactical retreat took the form of the N.E.P. In the East, it consisted in opening relations not only with the working and peasant classes of the backward countries but with the nationalist bourgeoisie as well. The development of native capitalism, hostile to European imperialist interests, seemed to be, after all, a necessary phase through which Asia and Africa would have to go. Relations were established with the governments of Asian countries, in

the hope that these governments might be driven to the Left. But the eventuality of a communist revolution in Germany still was there. The "Westerners", Trotsky, Zinoviev, and others, kept their eyes on Europe and, driven by their revolutionary optimism, advocated soviets for the East, considering that part of the world, however, as relatively unimportant and secondary. Eastern communists such as M. N. Roy of India and Semaoen or Tan Malaka of Indonesia constantly clamored for recognition of the colonial countries as the most important immediate battlefield of the anti-imperialist struggle, but they continued to meet with scepticism and even prejudice on the part of the "Westerners".

In 1923 the situation changed decisively and the International turned its whole attention from the West to the East. The new revolutionary attempt in Germany (Saxony and Hamburg) failed completely. Capitalism, in spite of crises and social unrest, showed undreamed-of strength. It adopted new methods, which classical Marxism had never thought of as being possible or probable, and re-established its balance. The old-fashioned *laissez-faire* economy was being replaced in the West by state intervention, which, either in the form of the democratic welfare state or in that of fascist totalitarianism, succeeded in keeping capitalism alive and in pumping fresh air into its weary lungs. Fouled in the West by these new processes, which they defined as a stabilization of capitalism, the Bolsheviks turned to the colonies in the hope of kindling nationalist revolutions there, and thus to deal a series of indirect blows to the capitalist edifice. At the fourth congress, the tactics of co-operation with the nationalist bourgeoisie of certain colonial countries were therefore adopted. Tactical alliances were henceforth to be concluded not only with very radical left-wing nationalists, but — as Tan Malaka urged — even with such movements as Pan-Islamism.

But soon the whole national-colonial question became embodied in the events in China. From 1925 to 1927, China was the prototype of the national-revolutionary semi-colony. The communists joined the Kuomintang and continued to support it even when its bourgeois leaders began to show signs of counter-revolutionary tendencies. But the old split between "Westerners" and "Easterners" appeared again. The failure of proletarian revolution in the West had given the upper hand to the "Eastern" group, led by Stalin and Bukharin. Pessimistic regarding the West, the Stalinist group believed that the national-bourgeois revolution was the maximum that the Comintern could hope to achieve under the circumstances. They saw the revolution in terms of neatly defined and separated phases, and argued that under the conditions of "stabilized capitalism" the colonial East would have to stop at the bourgeois-democratic phase, in which the local bourgeoisie, and not the communists, had the upper hand. The "Western" faction, led by Trotsky, fought a losing battle against that view. Faithful to the tenets of the classical Marxism of the early heroic days of the Communist International, Trotsky continued to think in terms of purely proletarian revolution. According to him, revolutions were *permanent*; they could not stop at a given point; and refusal on the part of the Chinese com-

munists to set up soviets and to try to drive the revolution into its proletarian phase would mean sacrificing even the purely democratic progress which had already been made. Trotsky was the man of the proletarian revolution—of the great ultimate upheaval that was still to come—, while Stalin was the organizer of the Jacobin, nationalist revolution which a large part of the world had not yet completed. Trotsky was merely conscious of *failure in Europe*; Stalin had his eyes fixed on *progress in Asia*.

Stalin won, but his caution did not save the Chinese communists from defeat. Even in their moderation they were too radical for the Kuomintang. Chiang Kai-shek, whom Stalin wanted to “use”, to “squeeze dry like a lemon and then fling away”, did to the communists what they had hoped to do with him. Instead of being the lemon, he was the squeezer. Trotsky blamed the defeat on Stalin’s moderation. He was probably wrong. The whole world was in a non-revolutionary mood. It was probably inevitable that the Chinese revolution would come to a stop at the Chiang Kai-shek phase, and that the communist offensive be brought to a standstill.

The failure of socialist world revolution had brought about a “nationalization” of the revolution itself. The Soviet State, which at first had been intended to be merely a temporary Red bastion, until the advanced West should turn communist, remained in isolation, as the only proletarian state in the midst of a capitalist world. Its importance as the one and only carrier of socialism quite automatically brought it to a position of predominance over the Comintern. A contradiction arose; while the world remained unevenly developed, while the dream of simultaneous world-wide revolution faded, while the individual nations, instead of the whole world, became the battle-fronts of communist struggle, the Comintern itself became more and more rigidly centralized. While its task should have been to fight on *many* fronts, it became increasingly rigid under a single supreme command, with the tactical leaders on the various fronts losing their autonomy and their capacity for swift action based on the local situation. The Comintern became a tool of the Soviet State which had originally been intended to be its servant.

The increasing power of the Russian leaders caused them to consider themselves and their own state more and more as the sole effective carrier of the revolution. Their feeling of superiority, of revolutionary nationalism—more Jacobin than communist—found its expression in Stalin’s theory of Socialism in One Country. If the Western proletariat failed to seize power in the near future, it did not matter! The mighty Soviet Union would build socialism alone and thus *substitute herself for the West*.

This development had a new influence on the national-colonial question. In 1928, after Trotsky and his Left Opposition had been crushed, Stalin and his followers turned to the task of building socialism within the borders of the Soviet State. In order to do so, they had

to fight against a "right-wing", ultra-moderate "deviation" (Rykov, Tomsky, Bukharin). The fight was carried into the Comintern. Thus, because *Russia* was starting on a new ultra-radical, left-wing course, the *Comintern*, Russia's faithful instrument, was swept along in the same direction. The pre-1927 tactics of co-operation with bourgeois nationalists were abandoned, and the communists in all colonial and half-colonial countries began to carry out an ultra-left, intransigent policy, with the establishment of Soviets and bloody uprisings — which resulted in defeats and in a loss of influence among the people.

The new ultra-left policy, which followed the moderate tactics of 1923-1927, found an ideological justification in Stalin's theory of Socialism in One Country. If the Soviet Union could develop socialism by herself, within her own borders, without being aided by the advanced West, then she could completely substitute herself for the West even in regard to the colonial countries. Lenin had taught that, in the event of socialist revolution in the West, the East could advance toward socialism without passing through a capitalist phase. Stalin made the Soviet Union take the place of the West. His formula could be expressed as follows: Socialism in One Country = proletarian revolution = possibility for the colonies to "skip" the capitalist phase.

The gradual Eastward development of the Comintern from 1917 to 1928 was both a cause and an effect of the process of increasing centralization and authoritarianism inside Russia. The failure of the Western proletarian revolution left the Bolsheviks isolated in their Russian bastion. The attempt to establish a "dictatorship of the proletariat" in a country which was mainly inhabited by uneducated and even illiterate peasants, and to modernize and industrialize that country, made an increasing gap between the masses and the ruling élite inevitable. The more and more pronounced autocratic character of the Russian Communist Party in its turn served to augment the differences between Russia and the West, and to make the Bolshevik solution less and less attractive to the workers of the countries having a liberal tradition. On the other hand, an autocratic Soviet State could still serve as a model for Asia and Africa, where the masses lived in extreme misery and did not know democracy in the Western sense on the word. The Bolsheviks' turn toward the East accentuated the already existing "Eastern", despotic tendencies inside Russia, and caused these tendencies ("bolshevization") to be transferred to the Comintern. The Comintern, because of the failure of Western international revolution, and because of its concentration on Eastern *national* problems, became a mere instrument of the Soviet Russian *national* state. All these factors worked together in a process of "cumulative change". Failure in the West and the consequent concentration on the East served to accentuate despotic tendencies inside Russia; these despotic tendencies hastened the degeneration of the International into a mere instrument of Soviet foreign policy. And finally this degeneration of the Comintern rendered

a communist revolution impossible in the East as well as in the West. Because the Stalin leadership was despotic, and controlled the International from above, it could not produce revolutions, for these require spontaneous action from below. An authoritarian, bureaucratic International could only establish tactical alliances with the leadership of the Eastern national movements, but could not provide real dynamic guidance in a revolt of the common people. This weakness, inherent in the Comintern's very structure, made it inevitable that the communists should be "used" by the nationalist leaders and then "flung away like a squeezed lemon".

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